A Companion to John of Ruusbroec

Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition

A SERIES OF HANDBOOKS AND REFERENCE WORKS ON THE INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE OF EUROPE, 500–1800

Editor-in-Chief

Christopher M. Bellitto (*Kean University*)

VOLUME 51

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/bcct*

A Companion to John of Ruusbroec

Edited by

John Arblaster & Rob Faesen



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: John of Ruusbroec and the Holy Trinity; detail from the *Praeconiale Viridis Vallis*, triptych depicting famous members of the monastery of Groenendaal, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Antwerp, ca. 1540 (anonymous).

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A companion to John of Ruusbroec / edited by John Arblaster & Rob Faesen.
pages cm—(Brill's companions to the Christian tradition, ISSN 1871-6377 ; VOLUME 51)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-90-04-26540-0 (hardback : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-90-04-27076-3 (e-book : alk. paper)
1. Ruusbroec, Jan van, 1293-1381. 2. Mysticism—Belgium—History—Middle Ages, 600–1500.
3. Mysticism—Catholic Church—History. I. Arblaster, John, editor of compilation.

BV5095.J3C66 2014
248.2'2092—dc23 2014005550

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual 'Brill' typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities.
For more information, please see brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1871-6377
ISBN 978 90 04 26540 0 (hardback)
ISBN 978 90 04 27076 3 (e-book)

Copyright 2014 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Global Oriental and Hotei Publishing.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.
Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

This book is dedicated
From Rob,
To the memory of Alexis, my father
And
From John,
In gratitude to Ben and John



Contents

List of Maps and Illustrations viii
List of Contributors x

Introduction 1
John Arblaster and Rob Faesen
Mysticism in the Low Countries before Ruusbroec 5
John Arblaster and Rob Faesen
John of Ruusbroec's Life and Works 47
John Arblaster and Rob Faesen
Ruusbroec in Edition: Manuscript and Print 81
Guido de Baere
Ruusbroec the Author 100
Hilde Noë
Essential Themes in Ruusbroec's Mysticism 130
Bernard McGinn
Ruusbroec as a Theologian: The Holy Spirit 179
Lieve Uyttenhove
Ruusbroec, Jordaens, and Herp on the Common Life: The Transformation of a Spiritual Ideal 204
Rik Van Nieuwenhove
Ruusbroec in Latin: Impulses and Impediments 237
Kees Schepers
Ruusbroec's Influence Until *c.*1800 286
Jos Andriessen
Overview of Ruusbroec Research 303
Loet Swart
Appendices
Middle Dutch Texts Related to Ruusbroec Translated by John Arblaster 339
Appendix One: Pseudo-Hadewijch 339
Appendix Two: Two Poems attributed to Ruusbroec 375
Appendix Three: The Prologue by Brother Gerard of Saintes 378
Appendix Four: The Epilogue by the 'Descendant' (*Nacomelinc*) 383
Appendix Five: The Eulogy of John of Ruusbroec by Jan van Leeuwen 389

Bibliography 393
Indexes 437

List of Maps and Illustrations

MAP CAPTION

1 Brussels in the 14th Century xiv
2 Ruusbroec's World xv

ILLUSTRATION CAPTION

John of Ruusbroec's Life and Works by John Arblaster and Rob Faesen
1 Portrait of John of Ruusbroec, Anonymous, ca. 1580, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Antwerp 48

Ruusbroec in Edition: Manuscript and Print by Guido de Baere
1 Manuscript Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 3067–73, fol. 56r (*Little Book*) 82
2 Manuscript Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 19295–97, fol. 3r (*Tabernacle*) 83
3 Cover Page of the Surius' Latin Edition of Ruusbroec's Works (1552) 91
4 Cover Page of the First Dutch Edition of *The Spiritual Espousals* (1624) 98
5 Cover Page of the First German Edition of Ruusbroec's Works (1701) 99

Ruusbroec the Author by Hilde Noë
1 John of Ruusbroec as Writer, Miniature in the Manuscript from Groenendaal, Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 19295–97, fol. 2v. 101

Ruusbroec's Influence until c.1800 by Jos Andriessen
1 Groenendaal in the 17th Century (formerly attributed to Jan or Pieter Breughel) 287
2 Groenendaal in the 17th Century (based on an earlier engraving) 287
3 Ruusbroec Found, Enflamed in the Love of God 299

Appendices

1 Manuscript Antwerpen Ruusbroecgenootschap Neerl. 385 II (Pseudo-Hadewijch) 372

2 Manuscript Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 3416–21 (Gerard of Saintes) 379

3 Portrait of Jan van Leeuwen, Anonymous, End 16th–Beginning 17th Century, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Antwerp 388

List of Contributors

Jos Andriessen
(PhD, Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven), 1955) was a member of the Ruusbroec Institute (*Ruusbroecgenootschap*, University of Antwerp) from 1953 until 1985 and professor at the Faculty of Arts (Department of History), University of Antwerp, from 1959 until his retirement. He died in 2007.

John Arblaster
is currently preparing a doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven) and the Ruusbroec Institute, University of Antwerp on the theme of deification in the mystical tradition in France and the Low Countries between the 12th and 14th centuries. His work focuses particularly on William of Saint-Thierry, Richard of Saint-Victor, Beatrice of Nazareth, (Pseudo-)Hadewijch, Marguerite Porete, and John of Ruusbroec.

Guido de Baere
studied philosophy in Heverlee-Leuven (section of the Pontifical Gregorian University) and Germanic philology and theology at the Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven). He is professor emeritus at the University of Antwerp and specializes in the study of Middle Dutch mystical literature, especially Ruusbroec's works. He was editor-in-chief of the critical edition of Ruusbroec's *Opera Omnia* (1981–2006).

Rob Faesen
(PhD, University of Antwerp, 1997) is professor at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven) and at the Faculty of Arts, University of Antwerp; he is a member of the Ruusbroec Institute, University of Antwerp. He edited Ruusbroec's *Seven Rungs* and has published on Hadewijch, Beatrice of Nazareth, Marguerite Porete, and John of Ruusbroec.

Bernard McGinn
is Naomi Shenstone Donnelley Professor Emeritus of historical theology and of the history of Christianity in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. He has written extensively in the areas of the history of apocalyptic thought and, most recently, spirituality and mysticism. His current long-range project is a seven-volume history of Christian mysticism in the West under the general title *The Presence of God*, five volumes of which have appeared:

The Foundations of Mysticism, The Growth of Mysticism, The Flowering of Mysticism, The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany, and *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism.*

Hilde Noë
(PhD, University of Antwerp, 2001) is a freelance researcher. She is the editor of Ruusbroec's *The Sparkling Stone* and *The Four Temptations*. She specializes in the use of metaphors in mystical literature and has written several articles on the subject. Her most important publication is *In een verwonderen van al deser rijcheyt. Het beeldgebruik in Jan van Ruusbroecs 'Dat rijcke der ghelieven,'* Antwerpse Studies over Nederlandse Literatuurgeschiedenis 7 (Leuven, 2001).

Kees Schepers
(PhD, Groningen, 1999) is Associate Professor at the Ruusbroec Institute, University of Antwerp. He has published critical editions of several late medieval mystical texts, both in the vernacular and in Latin, including Willem Jordaens' translation of Ruusbroec's *The Spiritual Espousals*. His research now focuses on the 16th-century mystical renaissance in the Low Countries and the neighboring Rhineland. He is currently preparing a critical edition, with an English translation, of the *Arnhem Mystical Sermons*.

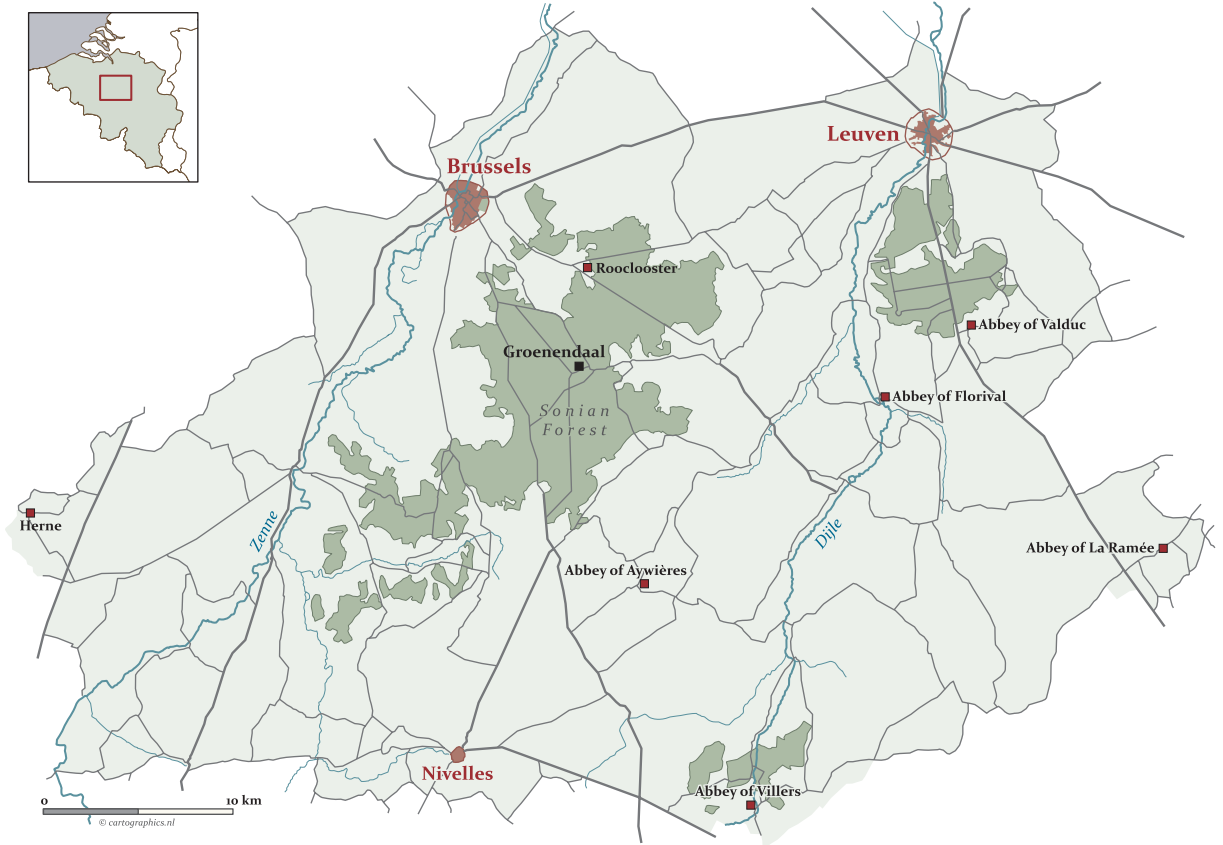
Loet Swart
is editorial secretary and editor-in-chief of the journal for spirituality *Speling* and academic associate of the Titus Brandsma Instituut in Nijmegen. He obtained his PhD with a dissertation on *De articulatie van de mystieke omvorming in 'Die geestelike brulocht' van Jan van Ruusbroec*, Nijmegen, Vantilt, 2006. He lectures at the annual seminar on medieval mysticism at the 'Universidad de la mística' (CITeS) in Avila.

Rik Van Nieuwenhove
lectures on theology at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland. His main research interests are medieval theology and spirituality, soteriology, and the theology of the Trinity. He has published *Jan van Ruusbroec—Mystical Theologian of the Trinity* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003); *An Introduction to the Trinity* (with Declan Marmion; Cambridge University Press, 2011); and *An Introduction to Medieval Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). He has co-edited *Late Medieval Mysticism of the Low Countries* (Paulist Press, 2008) and *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

Lieve Uyttenhove
(PhD, Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven), 2008) wrote a doctoral dissertation entitled *Trinity in the Works of Jan van Ruusbroec: Textual Analysis, Comparative Cultural Historical Research and Dialogue with Catherine M. LaCugna*. She has published articles (nationally and internationally) on Christian mysticism in general and on John of Ruusbroec and Maria Petyt, a 17th-century mystical writer. She is currently associated with the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven.



MAP 1 *Brussels in the 14th Century*



MAP 2 *Ruusbroec's World*

Introduction

John Arblaster and Rob Faesen

John of Ruusbroec may undoubtedly be considered among the greatest medieval mystical authors, and many (predominantly Dutch) studies on both his life and work have been written since the first Ruusbroec edition was published by Canon J.B. David in 1858–1868. Relatively few studies have been published on Ruusbroec in English, however. One of the primary reasons for this is that the English translation of his oeuvre was only completed in 2006, when the final volume of the new critical edition—*The Spiritual Tabernacle*—appeared in the series *Corpus Christianorum*: *Continuatio Mediaevalis*. Ruusbroec's complete works are now available to an English readership. To further stimulate Ruusbroec scholarship in English, this *Companion to Ruusbroec* provides an introduction to and discussion of all the relevant topics, with contributions by leading specialists in their respective fields. This volume was inspired in part by the extensive exhibition catalogue published by the Albert I Royal Library, Brussels, in 1981, to celebrate the 600th anniversary of Ruusbroec's death.[1] This fine catalogue is a veritable treasure-trove of information and one of the most important works available on Ruusbroec in any language.

The present volume contains, first, an overview of the mystical literature of the Low Countries before Ruusbroec. The second contribution provides a brief historical sketch of Ruusbroec's life and works, synthesizing and summarizing the relevant information contained in the various volumes of the new critical edition. After these historical, theological, and biographical introductions, the third contribution describes the circulation and transmission of Ruusbroec's texts. Guido De Baere discusses all the manuscripts and prints of Ruusbroec's works produced up to the end of the 19th century. Though Ruusbroec is, of course, primarily known as a mystical-theological author, his oeuvre also bears specific literary characteristics, which Hilde Noë treats in her contribution. The following three articles discuss the mystical-theological content of Ruusbroec's work: Bernard McGinn provides an extensive overview of Ruusbroec's major themes, while Lieve Uyttenhove and Rik Van Nieuwenhove

1 *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981). The book was prepared by the 'Comité Jan van Ruusbroec 1981,' chaired by Joseph Alaerts and consisting of representatives from the Albert I Royal Library, the Royal Academy for Dutch Language and Literature in Ghent, and the Ruusbroec Institute (University of Antwerp).

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_002

present two central aspects of his teaching, namely, the Holy Spirit and the 'common life.' The latter article also discusses Ruusbroec's profound influence on two later authors with regard to the 'common life.' Kees Schepers analyzes the various Latin translations of Ruusbroec's works and their circulation. Subsequently, the article by Jos Andriessen presents a broad perspective on Ruusbroec's influence across Europe in the centuries after his death, in large part thanks to the Latin translations of his work. This article was first published in the aforementioned exhibition catalogue (in Dutch) and is thus an older contribution. Considering, however, that very little further research has been done on this topic and that Andriessen provides a clear panorama of the subject, we have chosen to include his article in this collection, in English translation. The final contribution is by Loet Swart; it provides an exhaustive overview of Ruusbroec research since the 19th century. The bibliography at the end of this volume relies in large part on Loet Swart's meticulous research, for which we express our great appreciation here.

Furthermore, we have chosen to include in this volume a number of texts previously unavailable in English, which are of great importance for a correct historical, theological, and thematic appreciation of Ruusbroec's work. They are, first, the complete poem cycle by the author known as Pseudo-Hadewijch (or occasionally as Hadewijch II), which Ruusbroec often quotes. Unfortunately, the names 'Pseudo-Hadewijch' and 'Hadewijch II' are rather misleading, since the content of the poems bears little relation to the works of Hadewijch herself. The name was popularized due to a material link with Hadewijch, as the poems were transmitted in two manuscripts that also contain a number of the great 13th-century authoress' works. Consequently, however, these texts have been studied very little in the context of Ruusbroec research. They are accompanied here by the Middle Dutch original. We also provide two poems attributed to John of Ruusbroec by Laurentius Surius in his Latin edition of Ruusbroec's works (*cantiones duae piissimae*). In all likelihood, these poems were not written by Ruusbroec himself, and as a result they have been almost entirely neglected in Ruusbroec research. Nevertheless, they must certainly have been produced in Ruusbroec's mystical milieu, as were Pseudo-Hadewijch's poems. There are clear literary associations between the two sets of poems—the use of the expression *verre bi* is particularly striking—and Ruusbroec's oeuvre. Further, we also include three prose texts that are relevant to Ruusbroec studies but have hitherto not been available in English. The first is the prologue to a selection of Ruusbroec's works written by Brother Gerard of Saintes, the procurator of the Charterhouse at Herne, which Ruusbroec visited in approximately 1362. The text is important not only because it is one of the oldest extant texts about Ruusbroec but also because it was written by

someone who knew him personally. The information provided in the much better known 'biography' by Henricus Pomerius often appears to be of questionable historical accuracy and is thus by no means as reliable as Brother Gerard's prologue. A short text by Ruusbroec's so-called 'Descendant' (*Nacomelinc*) is also included. Some have identified the author as Jan Wisse, the first prior of Eemstein Abbey (near Dordrecht), who was briefly prior of Groenendaal in 1414. Like Brother Gerard, this 'descendant' compiled a number of Ruusbroec's works and added an apologetic commentary. Geert Warnar notes that in a certain sense, these two commentaries on Ruusbroec's works set the trend for all subsequent Ruusbroec research: the former focusing on Ruusbroec's theological content and the latter on its spiritual importance.[2] Finally, we have also included the eulogy of John of Ruusbroec by Jan van Leeuwen. The text is a personal, almost conversational and colloquial tribute to Ruusbroec by 'the good cook' at Groenendaal, who knew Ruusbroec personally for many years. All these texts are published here for the first time in English translation.

To conclude, we must note and clarify a number of practical points concerning this book. For the English translation of proper names, we have opted for a pragmatic approach, translating the names of people whose names generally appear in English in the secondary literature. For example, we translate *Guillelmus a Sancto Theodorico* as 'William of Saint-Thierry' and *Bernardus Claravallensis* as 'Bernard of Clairvaux.' *Jan van Ruusbroec* is rendered 'John of Ruusbroec' throughout, except in bibliographical references. Other names, such as *Jan van Leeuwen* or *Jan van Schoonhoven* are left untranslated.

Generally, references to Ruusbroec's works are to the most recent edition of his *Opera omnia* (*Corpus Christianorum*: *Continuatio Mediaevalis* 101–110),[3] unless otherwise indicated.

Abbreviations of the titles are used, followed by the line(s) in the Middle Dutch text of the critical edition:

Little Book = *The Little Book of Enlightenment* (*Opera omnia*, 1)
e.g., *Little Book* 765–766
Enclosures = *The Seven Enclosures* (*Opera omnia*, 2)
e.g., *Enclosures* 456
Espousals = *The Spiritual Espousals* (*Opera omnia*, 3)
e.g., *Espousals* a456

2 Warnar (2007), p. 323.

3 For detailed bibliographical information, see note 36 in the chapter by Guido de Baere in this volume.

Espousals b456–b457
Espousals c22–c23
Realm = *The Realm of Lovers* (*Opera omnia*, 4)
e.g., *Realm* 1666
Tabernacle = *The Spiritual Tabernacle* (*Opera omnia*, 5–6)
e.g., *Tabernacle* 3:92–93, 3:111–112
Tabernacle 5:6136–6154
Beguines = *The Twelve Beguines* (*Opera omnia*, 7)
e.g., *Beguines* 1:367
Beguines 2a:147–168
Beguines 2b:890
Beguines 2c:821–843
Mirror = *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness* (*Opera omnia*, 8)
e.g., *Mirror* 1889–1901
Rungs = *The Seven Rungs* (*Opera omnia*, 9)
e.g., *Rungs* 24–25
Stone = *The Sparkling Stone* (*Opera omnia*, 10)
e.g., *Stone* 335
Temptations = *The Four Temptations* (*Opera omnia*, 10)
e.g., *Temptations* 80–93
Faith = *The Christian Faith* (*Opera omnia*, 10)
e.g., *Faith* 402
Letters (*Opera omnia*, 10)
e.g., *Letter* I *8–*10
Letter I 4–6
Letter I 8–*43

Where a reference is not to the Middle Dutch text but to the English translation, the number of the line is preceded by 'E,' e.g., *Espousals* Eb765. For Surius' Latin translation, the line is preceded by 'S,' e.g., *Espousals* Sb765.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Flemish Research Foundation (FWO) for their generous support and to Julian Deahl, Marcella Mulder, Ivo Romein, and Wouter Bok at Brill Publishers for their invaluable assistance.

Mysticism in the Low Countries before Ruusbroec

John Arblaster and Rob Faesen

This contribution examines the mystical literature of the Low Countries preceding John of Ruusbroec. Naturally, we do not intend to provide a complete overview, which would be utterly impossible within the constraints of one chapter. Nor is it our intention to identify Ruusbroec's literary or theological sources. Indeed, detailed research into Ruusbroec's sources has yet to be conducted—a lacuna that has previously been signaled.[1] The intention of this contribution is merely to explore the mystical-spiritual landscape and to indicate a number of important elements.

Background

We need not reiterate that there was a long tradition of mystical experience and reflection in the Low Countries before John of Ruusbroec. In his concise overview, Albert Deblaere indicated a number of significant elements of this tradition:

> The mysticism of the Low Countries exhibits characteristics which reappear in various groupings of mystics from Carolingian times to the 17th century—what is now Flanders played the dominant role in the 13th and 14th centuries, while in the 15th and the 16th it was the present-day Netherlands. The *Vita* of St Gertrude of Nivelles (7th century, family of Pepin) mentions her bridal mysticism. This mysticism is generally considered to be the high-point of the spirituality of the West and is often traced back to Bernard of Clairvaux. Since Carolingian times, devotion to the Trinity was cultivated in the diocese of Liège. The feast was first introduced by Stephen of Liège († 920). Out of devotion to the Eucharist, the feast of Corpus Christi was introduced in the 13th century at the instigation of the saintly nuns Juliana of Mont Cornillon and Eva of St Martin. The creator of the doctrine of the *amor illuminatus*, William of St Thierry, friend of St Bernard, to whom it has often been ascribed, was likewise from Liège. His writings were widely read throughout the Netherlands. Inner union with Christ, bridal mysticism, devotion to the Trinity,

1 See de Baere (1992).

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_003

> Eucharistic and Christocentric piety, as well as the teaching on the development of the life of prayer, which the doctrine of the *amor illuminatus* further developed—these are the characteristic elements of the mysticism of the Low Countries.[2]

Stefanus Axters conducted extensive research into the sources in this regard. The first volume of his *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in de Nederlanden* provides an overview of his findings beginning from the first forms of spirituality after the Christianization of the Low Countries under the Romans. It is impossible to summarize all Axters' work or the recent research into the older sources here.[3] We will therefore limit our discussion to one example from the Carolingian period.

In the above quote, Albert Deblaere notes a 'trace' of nuptial mysticism in the *vita* of Gertrude of Nivelles. A similar trace—in this case of Trinitarian mysticism—is to be found in the *Vita Bavonis*. Bavo was born into a noble family in Haspengouw, and was later married to the daughter of the Merovingian Count Adilio. The couple had a daughter, Agletrudis. After his wife's unexpected death, Bavo came into contact with the missionary bishop Amandus and converted to Christianity; his baptismal name was Allowin. He gave his possessions to the poor and accompanied Amandus on his missionary journeys. After spending several years at the Abbey of Ganda, which had been founded by Amandus, he received permission to live as a hermit at Medmedung (the present Mendonk, a borough of Ghent). He lived there in seclusion for three years, and died *c.*654. There are four extant biographies of Bavo, the earliest written in the ninth century and undoubtedly based on older sources.[4] Near the end of his *vita* we find the following:

> The day upon which he would be rewarded approached and Allowin, the man of God, remained steadfast in the confession of God. When he had succumbed to sleep for a time, he saw the angel of the Lord descend upon him in the form of a dove. This vision made him very afraid, but the grace of divine consolation cheered him immediately. The entire cell in which the man of God lay was filled with an ineffably fine fragrance, clearly indicating that an angel of light and sweetness had arrived. And it was right and just that the angel of light appeared to him in the form of a dove, considering that he bore the simplicity of a dove in his heart—

2 Deblaere (2004b), p. 91.

3 See Opgenhaffen (2013).

4 Cf. Podevijn (1941).

though when tempted he did not forfeit shrewdness. Naturally, the following is clear: considering that the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove above the head of the Savior of the human race near the waters of the Jordan—when the voice of the Father resounded above his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased, when the Father in the voice, the Son in the man and the Holy Spirit in the dove clearly and plainly revealed the whole Trinity simultaneously—that is undoubtedly why the Trinity also made the angel appear to the blessed man Bavo in the form of a dove. Indeed, he abidingly possessed the Trinity in his heart, as sure as he was and undoubting that neither death, nor life, nor any creature could separate him from the love he possessed in Christ. To increase the recognition of the exceptional achievements of such a great man in both height and breadth—because like a city on a hill he could not remain hidden—one day he saw that the standard of the holy cross had descended upon him out of heaven; this increased his faith in his reward, as he became worthier to contemplate heavenly things. Thus would he also open the door for the knocking Lord with greater certainty, as he realized that the Lord had shown him reliable signs. The man of God did not doubt, he did not hesitate, but with ineffable joy he desired to be dissolved and to progress towards Christ. He incessantly said: 'Lord, not my will, but thy will be done.'[5]

5 *Appropinquante vero remunerationis eius die, indesinenter vir Domini Allowinus in confessione Dei perduravit. Cum vero se paululum sopori dedisset, angelum Domini in specie columbae super se venientem conspexit* (cf. Mt. 3:16). *Quem hoc visu perterritum statum divinae consolationis gratia refovet, atque totam cellulam, in qua idem vir Dei erat, inestimabilis suavitatis fraglantia* [sic] *replet, ut palam daretur intelligi angelum lucis et suavitatis illuc advenisse. Nec inmerito ei angelis lucis in specie columbae ostenditur, quia simplicitatem columbae gerebat in corde, licet astutiam serpentis non desereret in temptationibus* (cf. Mt. 10:16). *Licet enim, quia super redemptorem humani generis ad fluenta Iordanis Spiritus sanctus in specie columbae demonstratus est, ubi paterna vox auditur super Filium suum dilectum, in quo ei bene complacuit, ubi et Pater in voce, Filius in homine, Spiritus sanctus in columba totaque Trinitas simul manifeste declarata est; sine dubio etiam beato viro Bavoni ipsa Trinitas angelum in specie columbae ostendit, quia ipse eandem Trinitatem intrinsecus fixam in corde gerebat, certus sine dubio, quia neque mors neque vita neque ulla creatura posset eum separare a dilectione quam habebat in Christo* (cf. Rom. 8:35). *Sed ut tanti viri praecedentium meritorum opinio longe lateque crebrescet, qui sicut civitas in monte posita latere non potuit* (cf. Mt. 5:14), *quadam die super se vexillum sanctae crucis de caelo descendisse vidit, ut tanto ei fides de remuneratione augeretur, quanto magis ac magis caelestibus optutibus dignus foret; et tanto securior aperiret pulsanti Domino ostium, quanto cognovisset indicia sibi certa fuisse a Domino ostensa. Sed vir Domini nihil dubitans, nihil hesitans, cum ineffabili gaudio dissolvi concupivit et ad Christum*

This *vita* describes Bavo's experience of seeing 'the angel of the Lord descend upon him in the form of a dove.' Strikingly, the Carolingian author of the *vita* interprets the experience as Trinitarian: just as the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ in the form of a dove after his baptism, the same now happens to Bavo. This implies that he shared in the experience of Christ, namely, that he loved and was loved like Christ. Nothing could separate him from the love that he possessed in Christ. The Spirit is the loving unity of the Father and the Son, and Allowin was drawn up into this loving unity. Furthermore, the author states that he 'possessed it abidingly in his heart.' The author thus clarifies that the vision Allowin received made him realize that he was drawn into the life of Christ, and that he consequently participated in the eternal love of the Father and the Son. This is later confirmed: Bavo sees 'the standard of the holy cross' descend upon him out of heaven. It is clear that Bavo, sensing his impending death, realized that his experience would correspond completely to the life of Christ. As a result, he was no longer afraid of the prospect of death, but through the 'reliable sign' that he received, began to understand it as the moment at which his life communion with Christ became more profound. He was not afraid; on the contrary, he eagerly anticipated his death. In biblical terms (cf. Phil. 1:23), this desire is described as a longing to 'progress towards Christ.' In this light, it is not particularly surprising that Allowin constantly prayed 'Lord, not my will but thy will be done': Christ's words resounding in his own prayer.

William of Saint-Thierry

The important influence of William of Saint-Thierry on Ruusbroec was established a considerable time ago.[6] Thanks to the research of Paul Verdeyen, however, it has been given clearer definition.[7] Concerning mystical theology, William was the pre-eminent spiritual father of the tradition in the Low Countries. We will therefore devote more extensive attention to his theology.

William was born in approximately 1075 in the region of Liège (*apud Leodium*). His native language may thus have been French, but he may also

---

pergere. Illud tamen indesinenter aiebat: 'Domine, non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat' (cf. Lk. 22:42). *Vita Bavonis* (1902), pp. 543–544.

6 Cf. Van Mierlo (1927c). See also Verdeyen (1977+1995a).

7 Verdeyen (1990). This section relies predominantly on Verdeyen's research on William, the importance of which is attested by Rydstrøm-Poulsen (2010). Further significant studies containing variant opinions include Déchanet (1942), Brooke (1959), Javelet (1967), and Bell (1984). Overviews of research on William since 1900 may be found in Verdeyen (1998) and Rydstrøm-Poulsen (2008).

have been raised in Dutch, considering that the linguistic border is located near Liège. He received his first intellectual formation in Liège itself. He soon moved to Reims, however, probably due to the polarized ecclesiastical situation in the city of Liège following the episcopal election of Otbert by Emperor Henry IV in 1091. He became a Benedictine at the Abbey of Saint-Nicaise, a monastery that had suffered a number of difficult years but became a center of religious observance and monastic culture thanks to the election of Abbot Joran. It is generally assumed that during his years at Saint-Nicaise, William primarily continued his studies, reading the works of Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory, and others. He was also familiar with the debate with Berengar of Tours. Paul Verdeyen has demonstrated extensively that William's encounter with Bernard of Clairvaux was of great importance in the development of his thought. The longer meeting which occurred in approximately 1128 at Clairvaux, when Bernard and William studied the Song of Songs—and, according to Verdeyen's hypothesis, Origen's commentary on it—was decisive.

We opine that they did not limit themselves to reading the biblical text together; they also read the two sermons and the commentary Origen devoted to the Song of Songs. They especially scrutinized the moral sense of Origen's works and discovered there the various stages of the interior drama of which God and the soul are the actors and interpreters. They also found there the goal of our earthly pilgrimage: the nuptial encounter between the soul-bride and the divine Bridegroom. This encounter is fully realized in eternity but is already announced and manifested here below through spiritual ascent and the graces of the mystical life.[8]

In 1121, William was elected abbot of the nearby Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Thierry. As abbot, William devoted himself to the spiritual renewal of monastic life, as is evident from, among other things, the sharply worded letter he wrote in name of twenty-one Benedictine abbots meeting in chapter at Soissons in 1132 to Cardinal Matthieu, the papal legate to France, who was an ardent supporter of Cluny and opposed the innovations inspired by Cîteaux. In 1235, he resigned as abbot and became a Cistercian monk at Signy. In this period, he encouraged Bernard of Clairvaux to take action against Peter Abelard. Entirely unjustifiably, the discussion between William and Bernard on the one hand and Abelard on the other is occasionally presented as a debate between conservative anti-intellectuals and a progressive intellectual. This presentation completely fails to appreciate the heart of the matter, namely, the value of contemplative theology. In his 'Golden Epistle' (*Epistola aurea*), William sketches his conception of the ideal program of Christian intellectual

8 Verdeyen (1989), p. xiv.

life. William focuses on a certain type of life, which he considers to be the epitome of his subject, namely, the life of a hermit. According to William, hermits rather than schools and academic institutions guarantee the future of Christian contemplative-intellectual life. For contemporary readers, this may appear an unusual line of thought. It may be useful, however, to examine William's underlying conviction more closely. William presupposed that every form of knowledge about God is premised on the complete dedication of the whole person to God, which begins with the exterior, material, physical dimension. In every concrete action, the person is oriented towards the good. The intellectual dimension flourishes when the human, through the natural insight's power of discernment, comes to know and enjoy the good. Third, William describes the spiritual dimension, when the person not only knows but also tastes the good, clings to it, and is guided in it by the Holy Spirit. The *Epistola aurea*, probably William's most famous work, was written after a visit to the then-recent Carthusian foundation at Mont-Dieu, in the French Ardennes. The letter was written as an expression of William's gratitude for the hospitable response he had received but is also—albeit indirectly—addressed to the second generation of young Cistercians, who were potentially in danger of forgetting the order's original inspiration, due to its remarkable success.

William's works, which were often circulated ascribed to his great friend Bernard, found their way to the Low Countries. There is little doubt that Ruusbroec read a number of these works. Paul Verdeyen has provided striking textual examples:[9]

- William states that the Son is born eternally of the Father without ever being separated from the fullness of the Father,[10] which Ruusbroec recapitulates as follows: 'But in the Father the Son is sonly and unborn, like an indwelling fruit of his nature, and there the nature behaves in a fatherly way: always to give birth, and in a sonly way: to be born without cessation.'[11]
- Regarding the Eucharist, William describes that the communicant does not adopt Christ into his/her own substance but is drawn into Christ's divine life.[12] Ruusbroec recapitulates this as follows: 'The fruit of God is the Son of God [. . .] and is so unfathomably sweet to our throat that we cannot swal-

9 Verdeyen (1981b), p. 4.

10 *Semper in Patre, semper de Patre*, William of Saint-Thierry, *Aenigma* (2007), p. 173.

11 *Maer in den vader es de sone soonlec ende ongheboren, als ene inblivende vrocht sijnre natueren. Ende daer houdt hare die natuere vaderlec: altoes te ghebaerne, ende soonlec: sonder onderlaet gheboren te werdene. Mirror* 923–926.

12 William of Saint-Thierry, *De sacramento* (2003), pp. 68–70.

low it or change it into ourselves; rather it swallows us and changes us into itself.'[13]

- In his *Epistola aurea*, William states that every person naturally possesses likeness and union with the Creator but that this natural likeness is of no merit as such in God's eyes.[14] Ruusbroec recapitulates this as follows: 'And this unity is above time and place and always acts without cease after the mode of God [...] This is the nobility which we have by nature in the essential unity of our spirit, where it is naturally united with God. This makes us neither holy nor blessed, for all persons, good and evil, have this within themselves.'[15]

With respect to the present volume, it is significant that at the end of the 15th century, the library of Groenendaal contained several of William's works: the *Epistola aurea*, the *Meditationes*, and the treatises *De contemplando Deo*, *De natura et dignite amoris, Speculum fidei*, and *Aenigma fidei*.[16]

William's significance in the development of mystical literature in the Low Countries, however, is of even greater importance than the many textual links. William's most influential ideas may be summarized as follows.

God's Triune Nature

It is important to emphasize as a preliminary point that William's theology is fundamentally Trinitarian. Moreover, in his conception, there is no 'divine nature' from which the three divine persons proceed. Medieval Trinitarian thought was dominated by Augustine's analogy to clarify the unity of the three divine persons in the Trinity, namely, the distinction of the three faculties (memory, intellect, and will) in one human person. Based on this analogy, one might easily formulate a conception of God in which the three divine persons are ultimately only three aspects that proceed from one divine nature. This, however, is not William's conception of the divine Tri-unity. In line with Jn. 10:38, William conceives of the mystery of the Trinity as a divine indwelling of the three persons in one another. The Son and the Spirit proceed *from* the

13 *De vrocht gods, dat es de sone gods* [...] *es alsoe grondeloes soete onser kelen, dat wise niet verswelghen en connen, noch ghewandelen in ons, maer si verswelcht ende verwandelt ons in hare*. *Stone* 805–809.

14 William of Saint-Thierry, *Epistola* (2003), pp. 281–282.

15 *Ende dese eenicheit es boven tijt ende stat, ende werct altoes sonder onderlaet na die wise gods* [...] *Dit es de edelheit die wi hebben van natueren in die weselijcke eenicheit ons gheests, daer hy natuerlijcke vereenicht es met gode. Dit en maect ons heylich noch salich, want dit hebben alle menschen in hem, goede ende quade*. *Espousals* b1660–b1667.

16 Verdeyen (1981b), p. 3.

Father, but simultaneously remain *in* the Father, just as the Father remains in them both. In other words: the Son and the Spirit are in their source and in themselves in equal measure.

The Son remains always in the Father, from whom He has existence by birth; the Holy Spirit remains always in the Father and the Son, from who He has existence by procession. The Son and the Holy Spirit are *in the Father*, in the measure that they are what the Father is, and they are both *from the Father*—the one by birth and the other by procession—in the measure that they have received from the Father the being that they are, and the Father is in each of both, to the measure that He Himself is what they are.[17]

Consequently, the unity of the divine nature by no means excludes the 'alterity' or otherness of the distinct divine persons. On the contrary, unity and alterity are both necessary components for the life of God, which is love. That is why he emphasizes that the Son is not born once and for all from the Father but that He is born continually from the Father.[18]

The three divine persons give themselves in love to one another, and this gift in no way reduces the being of the giver, nor increases the being of the receiver. The necessary cohesion of unity (divine nature) and alterity (divine persons) had been affirmed by theological reflection in the patristic period. Furthermore, William considers this to be the model and origin of every loving encounter and relationship.[19] In the same way, the loving union of the human soul with God by no means threatens the soul's created nature or the creating nature of God.

---

17 *Semper quippe Filius in Patre est, de quo nascendo est; semper Spiritus Sanctus in Patre et Filio, de quibus procedendo est. Sunt in Patre Filius et Spiritus sanctus, in quantum quod ille est, et ipsi sunt; sunt de patre, alter nascendo, alter procedendo, in quantum a Patre habent esse quod sunt; est pater in utroque, in quantum hoc est, quod illi sunt*. William of Saint-Thierry, *Adversus Abaelardum* (2007), p. 32.

18 Although William invokes Augustine's authority (specifically Augustine's *Epistola* 238, 4, 24), it appears especially to be a position defended by Origen (*In Jeremiam* 9, 4), Verdeyen (1990), pp. 61–62.

19 Paul Verdeyen associates this with the transcendence of God, which emphasizes the alterity of the person and an ever-renewed possibility for new union. God is transcendent, not only with respect to humanity but also within Himself: 'La transcendance de l'absolu appartient à sa propre intériorité. Dieu se dépasse toujours aussi en lui-même, en son propre être; il porte en soi expansion et nouveautés continuelles. Le Dieu apophatique ne se rapporte pas seulement à la faiblesse de notre intelligence: l'Être absolu est proprement inexprimable.' Verdeyen (1990), p. 69.

Complete Participation in God's Life

William then discusses the mystical union between God and the human soul in terms of a complete participation in the life of the Trinity. Paul Verdeyen has discovered a striking difference between William and his great friend Bernard in this regard. Similar to his famous opponent Peter Abelard, Bernard's thought is based on the 'divine essence' from which the three divine persons proceed. Consequently, in Bernard's conception, the union of the soul with God must necessarily be of a lower order than that of the divine persons:

> Unless I am mistaken, this clearly highlights the difference, or better yet, the inequality of the two unities. The first is based on the unity of essence, while the second is based on two different essences. Nothing could be more different that the unity of one thing and the union of different things. And thus, as I indicated, the employed terms *unus* [cf. *qui adhaeret Deo, unus spiritus est* (1 Cor. 6:17)] and *unum* [cf. *Ego et Pater unum sumus* (Jn. 10:30)] refer to the necessary distinction between the unitive being that exists between the Father and the Son, and a certain correspondence of feeling that unifies God and the soul.[20]

In Bernard's conception, the union between God and the soul must be located on the level of the faculties (union of will), not on the level of the *wesen*, or being as such. In this view, an encounter or loving union between God and the soul is impossible on the level of the existence. Consequently, according to Bernard, God and the soul remain in a certain sense two distinct substances that can never encounter one another fully, as this would imply a reduction of one of both. William, in contrast, understood mystical union on the most fundamental level: 'In His manner, [the Holy Spirit] becomes for the human person with regard to God what He is for the Son with regard to the Father and for the Father with regard to the Son in their consubstantial unity' (*Hoc idem fit homini suo modo ad Deum quod consubstantiali unitate Filio est ad Patrem vel Patri ad Filium*).[21] It would be incorrect to conclude from this statement that William defends an absolute identity between mystical union and the Trinitarian unity. Indeed, he refers to the first as 'becomes' (*fit*) and the second

20 *Patet, ni fallor, satis non modo diversitas, sed et disparitas unitatum, una in una, altera in diversis exsistente essentiis. Quid tam distans a se, quam unitas plurium et unius? Ita inter unitates, ut dixi, determinant 'unus' et 'unum,' quod per 'unum' quidem in Patre et Filio essentiae unitas, per 'unus' vero inter Deum et hominem non haec, sed consentanea quaedam affectionum pietas designatur*. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Super Cantica* (1958), p. 220.

21 William of Saint-Thierry, *Epistola* (2003), p. 282 (1. 511–513), which Verdeyen (1990) refers to as 'the most concise expression of William's fundamental intuition' (pp. 75–76).

as 'is' (*est*). Moreover, concerning the former, he adds: in His manner (*suo modo*). According to William, the contemplative person experiences being drawn into the embrace of the Father and the Son (*in amplexu et osculo Patris et Filii mediam quodammodo se invenit beata conscientia*)[22]—which is poured out in the soul. When William emphasizes that the human soul does not 'become God Himself' in the mystical union (but does become what God is),[23] he does not do so out of caution to avoid pantheism, but because this is precisely how he conceives of the structure of love: whatever might be predicated of the Holy Spirit as it binds the Father and the Son in their divine unity might be predicated of the way the Holy Spirit unifies the soul and God in mystical union. William's conception of love and mystical union is thus fundamentally different and more radical than Bernard's. The fact, however, that he does not interpret the union of God and the soul and the unity of the divine persons as two distinct realities on a different level, inspired sharp critique not only from Gerson, but also later.[24]

If the divine life is Trinitarian, the union of the soul with God must necessarily have the same Trinitarian structure. This implies that the soul participates in the same Spirit; i.e., in the same love as the Father and the Son. William adds an important clarification, however, namely, that in the Trinity, the Spirit *is* the mutual love between the Father and the Son; the Spirit *gives* and *realizes* this love in the soul. As mentioned above, William does not consider the loving union between God and the soul to be located on the ontological level.[25] According to him, the deification of the soul is the most profound intention of God's *love*, as the following central passage from his *Commentary on the Song of Songs* clarifies:

---

22 William of Saint-Thierry, *Epistola* (2003), p. 282 (1. 513–514).

23 *Cum modo ineffabili et incogitabili fieri meretur homo Dei non Deus sed tamen quod Deus est: homo ex gratia quod deus est ex natura*, William of Saint-Thierry, *Epistola* (2003), p. 282 (1. 514–516)—as indeed the Son is never the Father, though He is always of the same substance as the Father (cf. William of Saint-Thierry *De contemplando* (2003), p. 165 (1. 413–424).

24 See Verdeyen (1990), pp. 84–86.

25 William distinguishes between *alium alium videre* and *aliud et aliud videre* (cf. William of Saint-Thierry, *Meditationes* (2005), pp. 16–17, 1. 82–85): in God, there is alterity and one nature, while in the encounter between God and the human person, the two partners have different natures. 'Dans le premier cas, il s'agit de la rencontre des Personnes divines qui *vident alium alium*, dans le second de la rencontre de deux partenaires inégaux *qui sunt aliud et aliud*. Nous avons vu déjà que l'unité trinitaire n'exclut point l'altérité des Personnes. Dans l'unité spirituelle entre l'âme et son Dieu, l'altérité ne persiste seulement sur le plan personnel, mais encore dans l'ordre des substances.' Verdeyen (1990), p. 101.

Therefore the Bride immediately goes on to speak of fruition and says: 'Our little bed is flowery.'[26] The little flowery bed is a conscience full of charm, and the joy of the Holy Spirit in it; it is the constant fruition of truth in its very fountainhead. It is the bed of which the same Bridegroom says: 'Upon whom shall my Spirit rest unless upon him who is humble and calm and who trembles at my words?'[27] It is pleasant to pause before the beauty of the flowery bed and consider its joyful pleasures—the springtime beauty of chastity and charity, the wafted fragrance of spiritual feelings and thoughts, the breath of the perfume of divinity and the strength of eternity. Upon this bed takes place that wonderful union and mutual fruition—of sweetness, and of joy incomprehensible and inconceivable even to those in whom it takes place—between man and God, the created spirit and the Uncreated. They are named bride and Bridegroom, while words are sought that may somehow express in human language the charm and sweetness of this union, which is nothing else than the unity of the Father and the Son of God, their kiss, their embrace, their love, their goodness and whatever in that supreme simple unity is common to both. All this is the Holy Spirit—God, Charity, at once Giver and Gift. Upon this bed are exchanged that kiss and that embrace by which the Bride begins to know as she herself is known. And as happens in the kisses of lovers, who by a sweet, mutual exchange, impart their spirit each to the other, so the created spirit pours itself out wholly into the Spirit who creates it for this very effusion; and the Creator Spirit infuses himself into it as he wills, and man becomes one spirit with God. (1 Cor. 6:17)[28]

---

26 Sg. 1:16.

27 Is. 66:2.

28 *Idcirco de fruitione statim subingit ac dicit: Lectulus noster floridus. Lectulus floridus est amoena conscientia, et gaudium in ea Spiritus sancti, et in ipso fonte sou iugis fruitio veritatis. Hic est de quo idem sponsus dicit: Super quem requiescet Spiritus meus, nisi super humilem et quietum et trementem sermones meos? Libet ad lecti floridi consistere decorem, et ad iocundas eius ambire delicias, castitatis atque caritatis decore vernantes, spirituali gratia sensuum seu intellectuum fragrantes, odoremque divinitatis et aeternitatis virtutem spirantes. In hoc siquidem fit coniunctio illa mirabilis, et mutua fruitio suavitatis, gaudiique incomprehensibilis, incogitabilis illis etiam in quibus fit, hominis ad Deum, creati spiritus ad increatum; qui sponsa dicuntur ac sponsus, dum verba quaeruntur quibus lingua hominis utcumque exprimi posit dulcedo et suavitas coniunctionis illius, quae non est alia quam unitas Patris et Filii Dei, ipsum eorum osculum, ipse amplexus, ipse amor, ipsa bonitas, et quicquid in unitate illa simplicissima commune est amborum; quod totum est Spiritus sanctus, Deus caritas, idem donans, idem et donum. Ibi etenim comparat se sibi ille amplexus et illud osculum, quo cognoscere incipit sponsa, sicut et cognita est; et sicut solet in amantium*

We may affirm three things on the basis of this passage. First, William states that the creating love of God has only one purpose, namely, to awaken love in the human soul, as a free person who finds fulfillment in the loving encounter with his/her Creator. Second, it follows from the above that the created soul has only one fulfillment, namely, to fall into the abyss of the divine mutual love between the Father and the Son. Third, this by no means implies the abrogation of the distinction between the Creator and the creature—indeed, the fulfillment is a 'new *creation*'[29]—and yet it is a complete union.[30]

This implies that William presents a perfect consistency in God:

> God acts identically in the intra-Trinitarian life and in the relationships he deigns to engage in with his creatures. Both levels involve the communication of being, life and love, while maintaining perfect freedom and independence. There is absolutely no imperative necessity in the divine relationships, nor in our deification. In God, all is grace, all is pure gratuitousness and the great folly of love.[31]

---

osculis, suaui quodam contactu mutuo sibi spiritus suos transfundentium, creatus spiritus in hoc ipsum creanti eum Spiritui totum se effundit; ipsi uero creator Spiritus se infundit, prout uult, et unus spiritus homo cum Deo efficitur. William of Saint-Thierry, *Super cantica* (1997), p. 70. Hart (1970), pp. 77–78.

29 2 Cor. 5:17.

30 Because the Trinitarian nature of God's being is central to William's thought, the human person may be drawn into God's life; indeed, God is both unity and alterity. In this regard, Verdeyen notes that is fundamentally different from the (Neo-)Platonic conception: 'The aspect of reciprocity in spiritual relationships is entirely absent from Platonic exemplarism. Plato did not conceive of any kind of encounter between ideal reality and its manifestations; there is nothing beside return and absorption.' (L' aspect de réciprocité dans les relatons spirituelles est parfaitement absent de l'exemplarisme platonicien. Platon ne conçoit aucune rencontre entre la réalité idéale et ses apparences; il n'y a que retour et absorbtion.) Verdeyen (1990), p. 127. 'His [William's] Trinitarian model is not the threefold model of the Platonic tradition: unity, emanation and return. We opine that the way he conceives of the opposing aspects of divine life [. . .] differ palpably from the Neo-Platonic model of Pseudo-Dionysius.' (Son schéma trinitaire n'est pas le schéma ternaire de la tradition platonicienne: unité, émanation et retour. Nous pensons que la manière dont il concilie les aspects opposés de la vie divine [. . .] diffère sensiblement du schéma néo-platonicien du Pseudo-Denys.) Ibid., p. 119.

31 'Dieu se comporte d'une façon identique dans sa vie intime et dans les rapports qu'il daigne développer avec ses créatures. Aux deux niveaux, il y a communication d'être, de vie et d'amour, sans que la liberté ni son indépendance n'en souffrent. Les relations divines, comme notre déification, ne répondent à aucune nécessité impérative. En Dieu tout est grâce, toute est pure gratuité et grande folie d'amour.' Ibid., p. 126.

Finally, it is evident that the Incarnation of the Son is crucial in this regard. The deification of the soul is founded on the encounter of God and the soul in Jesus Christ:

> He [William] affirms that the divine pedagogy, entirely oriented to our human condition, was an important divine motive in the decision to send His Son to become *verus homo*, participating completely in our human condition.[32]

To conclude, we may question what constitutes mystical union according to William. William—who is far less explicit in his personal descriptions than Bernard ('*secretum meum mihi*')—analyzes this union most comprehensively in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. He is especially interested in the specific structure of the union and in its consequences for the life of the human soul. The heart of the matter, in William's conception, is that this is a *loving union*. Crucially, William, joins two elements: the complete inequality of human nature and the Godhead, and the complete unity and mutuality of the two on the personal level.[33] The nature of the two partners remains different. God is a loving relationship by nature, and the human soul receives this loving encounter by grace. As a result, it participates in this love.

The *Mulieres Religiosae*

Albert Deblaere contended that William of Saint-Thierry's influence on the development of mystical literature can most clearly be seen when he is studied in the context of a theological tradition that reached an impasse due to a one-sided emphasis on the transcendence of God ('which [...] exalts the divine transcendence to such an extent that it threatens to drive all religious thought to *de facto* fideism').[34] He then indicated that one must look to the *mulieres religiosae* as the inheritors of William's thought:

---

32 'Il affirme que la divine pédagogie tout orienté sur notre condition humaine, a été un important motif divin dans la décision d'envoyer son Fils pour qu'il devînt *verus homo* partageant totalement notre condition humaine.' Ibid., p. 131.

33 Cf. William, *Super cantica* (1997), p. 68: 'Not only do we enjoy God, but God also enjoys our good, to the measure that he deigns to delight in it' (*Non solum etenim nos fruimur Deo, sed et Deus fruitur bono nostro, in quantum delectatur et gratum illud habere dignatur*).

34 'Qui [...] exalte tellement la transcendence divine qu'elle menace de conduire toute pensée religieuse à un fidéisme de fait.' Deblaere (2004a), p. 294.

> While men, formed in a well-established system of theological education, appear unable to escape the conceptual framework of this system, women dared to develop an original and dynamic mode of thought, which corresponds more to experience itself and which is confirmed by the Scriptures.[35]

Consequently, it is from this perspective that we must analyze a number of examples of the 13th-century *mulieres religiosae*. We must distinguish between indirect information available about these women via *vitae*, and the extant texts written by the women themselves. The latter category is relatively limited, as we have only the oeuvre of Hadewijch and one treatise by Beatrice of Nazareth (*Van seven manieren van minne*) at our disposal. The *vitae* are far more numerous, but occasionally have a tendency to mitigate the mystical dimension.[36]

Beatrice of Nazareth

Beatrice was born in Tienen, in 1200, as the youngest of six children. After a brief period of education with the beguines at Zoutleeuw, she became a student at the abbey school of Florival (Archennes/Eerken, now in Walloon Brabant). She later entered the abbey as a novice, when the monastery was still a Benedictine house. In 1218, however, the abbey transferred to the Cistercian Order. She was professed in 1216 and subsequently spent a brief time at the Abbey of La Ramée (Jauchelette), where she met Ida of Nivelles (see *infra*), with whom she would correspond until Ida's death. After her return to the

35 'Tandis que les hommes, formés au système bien établi d'une école théologique, paraissent incapable de sortir des rails conceptuels de ce système, les femmes osent développer un mode de penser original et dynamique, qui correspond davantage au caractère de l'expérience et qui est corroboré per l'Ecriture.' Ibid., p. 296.

36 'A distinct genre, which is even more difficult to decrypt and use, consists of the notes taken by the mystics' followers or friends, first collected and compiled, and then arranged in order to be reproduced in the *Vitae* according to the edifying ideal of hagiography. Occasionally, a fortunate coincidence reveals an original text fragment from the mystic, which allows us to compare the original to the adapted version presented in the hagiography of the *vita*; such was the case with *The Seven Manners of Love* by Beatrice of Tienen.' (D'un genre à part, encore plus difficile à déchiffrer et utiliser, sont les notes prises par les disciples ou amis des mystiques, d'abord recueillies et rassemblés, puis triées pour être reproduites dans les Vitae selon l'idéal édifiant de l'hagiographie. Parfois un heureux hasard fait découvrir une partie des écrits originaux du mystique, de sorte qu'on peut comparer cet original avec le remaniement qu'en a fait l'hagiographie dans la Vita: tel fut le cas des 'Sept manières d'aimer' de Béatrice de Tirlemont.) Deblaere (2004a), p. 293; see also Faesen (1999).

Abbey of Florival, she was sent to the new foundation of Maagdendal (Oplinter) and finally to the new foundation of Our Lady of Nazareth (Lier). She was elected prioress of the latter abbey in 1237, a post she held until her death in 1268. Of Beatrice's treatises, only one is extant, namely, *The Seven Manners of Love* (*Van seven manieren van minne*). This Middle Dutch text was transmitted anonymously. In 1926, however, Leonce Reypens convincingly demonstrated, by comparison with a paraphrase in the Latin *Vita Beatricis*, that Beatrice was the true author of the short mystical treatise.[37]

The structure of *Seven Manners* appears to have been understood in a number of ways by later readers. Marguerite Porete, for example, adopted the structure as such, incorporating and adapting many of Beatrice's themes and literal terms throughout *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, but especially in Chapter 118, which describes seven states of grace.[38] Ruusbroec, in contrast, who certainly also knew the text, appears to have incorporated it in a different structure, to correspond to his distinctions between the active, inner and contemplative lives. In doing so, he did no injustice to the text, as there are a number of inherent reasons to suggest this threefold division. *The Seven Manners* would thus be structured as an introduction followed by three 'diptychs' or pairs which each describe the same reality from two different perspectives on the experience—consolation and desolation. Conceived of in this way, the structure of the book is remarkably consistent with Ruusbroec's thought.

The 'first manner' describes the foundation upon which the entire treatise is based: the desire to live according to the image and likeness in which the soul is created, a desire that comes from *minne* and is oriented to the nobility, purity, and freedom of the human person. Beatrice thus provides an important interpretative key. Indeed, the reference to 'image' and 'likeness' (Gn. 1:26) had a very specific significance to her contemporaries. As early as the Patristic period (writers such as Origen and Irenaeus), one finds the conviction that the human soul itself is not the image of God but that the relevant verse implies the soul is created *to* God's image. The image of God is His Son, Christ. From this perspective, the soul is created 'according to the image of God, which is Christ,' and with the intention that the soul might correspond to this image. The *Seven Manners* thus fundamentally concern a desire for life communion with Christ.

The 'second manner' consists of loving without measure and without reward, above every human calculation (*sonder enich waeromme*/without any why). Beatrice's spirituality thus corresponds to that of Bernard, who also

37 Beatrijs, *Seven manieren* (1926), pp. 64*–65*; Beatrice was identified as the author of the *Seven Manners* by Reypens and Van Mierlo a year earlier. See Reypens & Van Mierlo (1925). The identification is questioned by Scheepsma (2008), pp. 182–189.

38 Arblaster & Faesen (2013b).

defends this ideal of love for God.[39] The 'third manner' is the counterpoint of this desire. The soul realizes that loving God in such a way transcends human capacity. The soul discovers that it constantly fails in its desire to love freely and measurelessly and, further still, that this shortfall is, in principle, unavoidable.

The 'fourth manner' describes the unexpected mystical experience. While the emphasis of the second and third manners is on the soul's own initiative—what the soul does and desires to do out of love—Beatrice now describes how God takes the initiative. Finding itself in the state described at the end of the third manner, the soul suddenly and unexpectedly experiences close proximity to God. The 'fifth manner' is the counterpoint of this experience. Such an experience of God's presence causes a raging storm in the soul; a fundamental desire. The soul has experienced a love that it did not consider possible, and this causes an unquenchable desire to reciprocate this love.

The 'sixth manner' describes the experience of being entirely drawn into God's life, and the realization that God's love alone is operative. The soul discovers its profoundest nobility: the freedom of love as it is experienced in God's life. Yet again, the 'seventh manner' forms the counterpoint of the reality of the sixth. Beatrice describes a measureless desire to be with Christ definitively; to participate in his divine life completely. It is not particularly surprising that Beatrice describes the 'seventh manner' as a desire. The love communion of the Father and the Son is one of constant reciprocation—the free gift of the one to the other. When the soul shares this love—and thus experiences being a 'son in the Son'—it desires nothing more than to gift itself in love as completely as Christ.

These three diptychs display a striking similarity with John of Ruusbroec's masterpiece *The Spiritual Espousals*. What Ruusbroec describes as the 'active life,' the 'inner life,' and the 'contemplative life' closely corresponds to Beatrice's description of an active, God seeking life, a mystical life in which God takes the initiative, and a life within God's own triune life. It is important to note that Beatrice does not present three chronologically sequential steps. The former stage is never relinquished by the next. Beatrice describes different aspects of the same reality. Although she describes the manners consecutively, one must bear in mind that she discusses one and the same love. The image of three concentric circles may be useful in this regard. In three 'stages,' the reader gradually moves to the center of love. The first circle operates on the level of human activity and active love for God (second and third manners). This level has an interior dimension that usually remains hidden but which may exceptionally

39 See, among others, Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo* (1963), p. 119.

and unexpectedly be opened, namely, when God Himself takes the initiative (fourth and fifth manners). The central point here is not what the human person might do for God but that God loves the human person unconditionally, independently of what the human person does or intends to do for God. Finally, the reader moves to the core of the interior dimension, which radically transcends the human person: the divine life itself, the fathomless love between the Father and the Son into which the human person is drawn (sixth and seventh manners).

Hadewijch

Hadewijch's oeuvre, which is of course also of great literary interest, was very influential on Ruusbroec. Her work is frequently quoted in Ruusbroec's texts, though he never names her explicitly.[40] Historically, she remains an obscure figure. Relatively plausibly, one might postulate that she lived in the Duchy of Brabant in the first half of the 13th century and that she was very familiar with the courtly love poetry of the French troubadours and the mystical thought of William of Saint-Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux.[41]

Naturally, we cannot discuss Hadewijch's entire mystical oeuvre within the scope of this article.[42] We may limit ourselves to a number of central themes, all of which appear in Hadewijch's Sixth Letter. According to Jozef van Mierlo, an expert on Hadewijch's work, this letter summarizes the main thoughts in her work.[43]

Minne (Love): The Christological Meaning

In the first instance, *minne* itself is the central theme of Hadewijch's oeuvre. In order to understand what *minne* actually is, Hadewijch claims that one must turn one's eyes to Christ. He is the fulfillment of *minne* because He fulfilled the will of the Father completely. The total submission of the Son to the Father is the fulfillment of the service of love:

> This is the way on which the Son of God took the lead, and of which he himself gave us knowledge and understanding when he lived as man. For from the beginning to the end of the time he spent on earth, he did and perfectly accomplished with discernment the will of the Father in all things and at all times, with all that he was, and with all the service he

40 This is noted by, among others, Porion (1954a), Axters (1964b), and Reynaert (1981a).

41 For a critical discussion of historical information which has often been taken for granted since the publication of Jozef Van Mierlo's edition, see Faesen (2004b).

42 See Dailey & Fraeters (2014).

43 Hadewijch, *Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, p. 51.

> could perform, in words and in works, in joy and in pain, in grandeur and abasement, in miracles, in being rejected, in suffering and fear, and in the distress of bitter death. With his whole heart and his whole soul, and with all his strength, in each and every circumstance, he was ready to perfect what was wanting on our part. And thus he uplifted us and drew us up by divine power and human justice[44] to our first dignity, and to our liberty, in which we were created and loved, and to which we are now called and chosen in his predestination, in which he has foreseen us from all eternity.[45]

This is precisely how Christ draws humanity to its original dignity. The human person, when called and elected in *minne*, is always drawn into a life 'in Christ.' It is only in Christ's loving service that the human person is truly human, as created. Created to the image of Christ, the human person is transformed to Christ's likeness only in the total service of love. Consequently, the service of love is essential union with Christ and furthermore, life in Christ.

Hadewijch distinguishes two aspects in the total service of love and union with Christ:

---

44 This is a clear allusion to Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*: 'This debt was so great that though it was owed only by humanity, it could only be repaid by God, so that its repayment demanded that the human also be God. It was therefore necessary that God adopt humanity in one person, in order that the person who by nature owed the debt but was powerless to repay it was the person who had that power.' (*Quod debitum tantum erat, ut illud solvere* [cf. *te voldoene dat ons ontbliven was*], *cum non deberet nisi homo* [cf. *met menscheliken rechte*], *non posset nisi Deus* [cf. *met godleker cracht*] *ita ut idem esset homo qui Deus. Unde necesse erat, ut Deus hominem assumeret in unitate personae, quatenus qui in natura solvere debebat et non poterat, in persona esset qui posset.*) Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus homo* (1963), pp. 438–440.

45 *Dit es de wech die de gods sone vore ghinc, ende dien hi ons ane hem seluen bekinnen dede ende verstaen doen hi mensche leefde: want hi in allen tide doen hi in ertrike was, van sinen beghinne toten inde, wrachte ende volbrachte onderschedenleke den wille sijns vader in allen dinghen ende in allen tide, met al dien dat hi was ende met al dien dienste dien hi gheleisten mochte in woerden in werken, in lief in leet, in hoghen, in nederen, in miraculen in versmaetheiden, in pinen, in aerbeide, in anxte, in node der bittere doet. Met alre herten, met alre zielen, met alre cracht stont hi in elken ende in allen sinnen euen ghereet te voldoene dat ons ontbleuen was. Ende was ons op draghende ende op treckende met godleker cracht ende met menscheliken rechte te onser eerster werdicheit, ende te onser vriheit, daer wi in ghemaect waren ende ghemint, ende nu gheroepen ende vercoren in siere predestinacien, daer hi ons van ewen in versien heuet.* Hadewijch, *Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, pp. 67–68 (1. 324–343). Hart (1980), pp. 62–63.

> With the humanity of God you must live here on earth, in the labors and sorrow of exile, while within your soul you love and rejoice with the omnipotent and eternal divinity in sweet abandonment. And the truth of both is one single fruition. And just as Christ's humanity surrendered itself on earth to the will of the majesty, you must here with love surrender yourself to both in unity. Serve humbly under their sole power, stand always before them prepared to follow their will in its entirety, and let them bring about in you whatever they wish.[46]

The first aspect of this service of love is union with Christ's humanity. This humanity implies 'to live here on earth, in the labors and sorrow of exile' (*leuen in aerbeide ende in ellenden*). The second aspect is union with Christ's divinity, and it implies 'to love and rejoice in sweet abandonment' (*minnen ende jubileren van binnen met enen sueten toeuerlate*). Both, however, find their union in living in the will of the Other. In her First Letter, Hadewijch describes this as follows: '*sicut in celo et in terra* always say both in actions and in words *fiat voluntas tua*' (*sicut in celo et in terra altoes met woerden ende met werken te seghene: fiat voluntas tua*),[47] and also 'sublime love is the one for the other' (*hoghe minne es deen vor dander*).[48] When Hadewijch concludes this union with Christ (as man and God) with 'the truth of both is one single fruition' (*ende haere beider waerheit es een enich ghebruken*), her position corresponds to an important Christological issue, namely, that there is neither division nor fusion between humanity and divinity in the person of Christ.[49] In Christ's humanity, the human person participates in the complete fulfillment of love's command, and the human person is elevated to his/her first dignity. This is possible for the sole reason that Christ is God Himself, and he fulfills love's command 'by his divine power' (*met godleker cracht*), since no human being is capable of doing this independently. The truth of both is 'one single fruition' (*een enich ghebruken*).

---

46 *Metter menscheit gods suldi hier leuen in aerbeide ende in ellenden, ende metten moghenden eweleken god suldi minnen ende jubileren van binnen met enen sueten toeuerlate. Ende haere beider waerheit es een enich ghebruken. Ende alsoe alse die menscheit hier plach dies willen der maiesteit, also seldi hier met minnen haerre beider willen in een pleghen. Oetmoedelike dient onder hare enighe moghentheit, ende staet altoes vore hen alse de ghene die te al haren wille steet. Ende laetse met v werken watsi willen*. Hadewijch, *Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, pp. 58–59 (1. 117–127). Hart (1980), p. 39.

47 Hadewijch, *Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, p. 17 (1. 41–45). Hart (1980), p. 47.

48 Ibid., 1. 35–36. Our translation.

49 Cf. Symbolum Chalcedonense: *in duabis naturis inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter*, Denzinger (1976), n° 302.

Human Participation in Divine Love (*Minne*)

What are the consequences for the soul that experiences *minne*? Union with Christ's humanity consists in carrying the cross. The fulfillment of the service of love may be beheld in the crucified one. Carrying the cross with Him implies 'fine service in all works of virtue and a sweet life of exile in all obedience' (*scone dienst in allen doechdeleken werken ende ellendich leuen in alre gehorsamheit*, 1. 366–368). The 'fine virtue' (*scone dienst*) is the practice of the virtues for which the soul is constantly and diligently prepared. The 'sweet exile' (*soete ellende*) is obedience through which, as mentioned above, the soul's life becomes the will of the Other. But Hadewijch also refers to union with Christ's divinity. She calls this the 'festival' (*hoghetijt*) in which *minne* reveals itself and displays its power 'on earth and in heaven' (*inder erden ende inden hemel*), to which the soul faithfully looks forward. Hadewijch emphasizes that this revelation of the power of *minne* draws the lover 'out of himself and robs him of heart and of mind, and causes him to die to himself and live in the practice of righteous love' (*vte hem seluen . . . gaen, ende roeft hem herte ende sen, ende doeten steruen ende leuen in pleghene der gherechter minnen*, 1. 356–360). It is clear that with respect to this second aspect, the lover is also drawn out of him/herself and lives in the life of the Other. A number of lines later, Hadewijch says that the tempestuous power of *minne* draws the person 'so out of itself' (*soe sere vte hem seluen*, 1. 362) that it becomes 'one spirit and one being with her [*minne*] and in her' (*een gheest ende een wesen si met hare in hare*, 1. 364). Life in union with Christ's humanity and union with His divinity are entirely the same at this point: the human soul is drawn 'out of itself.'

The theme of the 'virtues'—likewise prominent in Hadewijch's work—becomes clear from this perspective: the virtues are aspects of the life of Christ itself, and the practice of the virtues corresponds to the experience of union with Christ. Hadewijch emphasizes that the practice of the virtues is not a 'path' to attain enjoyment (*ghebruken*):

> For it is man's obligation to practice virtues, not in order to obtain consideration, or joy, or wealth, or rank or any enjoyment in heaven or on earth, but solely out of homage to the incomparable sublimity of God, who created our nature to this end and made it for his own honor and praise, and for our bliss in eternal glory.[50]

50 *Want men es schuldich doghet te werkene, niet om heerscap noch om bliscap, noch om rijcheit noch om hoecheit, noch om gheen ghenieten inden hemel noch inder erden, mer allene omme dat wel ghetamen der hoechster werdicheit gods, die menscheleke nature daer toe sciep ende maecte te siere eren ende te sinen loue ende te onser bliscap in eweliker glorien*. Hadewijch, *Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, p. 67 (1. 316–323). Hart (1980), p. 62.

Virtues are thus not a 'path' to attain enjoyment of God that can simply be abandoned when the goal has been reached. On the contrary, the virtues are the life of Christ itself, which is pure *minne* and which has no other purpose than the complete fulfillment of the service of love. This practice of the virtues is also brought to fulfillment on the cross.

The Opposite of *Minne*

Hadewijch often warns against the opposite of the complete service of love. In the Sixth Letter, she refers to this as carrying the cross of Simon of Cyrene, 'who carried the cross a short time, but he did not die on it' (*die dat cruce droech enen corten tijt mer hine sterffer niet ane*, 1. 291–292), in contrast to 'carrying the cross with Christ,' who died on it. Those who do not fulfill the service of love live miserably:

> So we wander, poor and unhappy, exiled and robbed of everything, on the rough roads of a foreign land (cf. Lk. 15:11–20). And we all had little need of doing so, were it not that illusions assail on us on every side. By this we show plainly that we do not live with Christ as he lived, neither do we forsake all as Christ did, nor are we forsaken by all as Christ was.[51]

Hadewijch refers here to 'miserable wandering in foreign lands,' an allusion to the famous term *regio dissimilitudinis*. In the Neo-Platonic tradition, this often implies physical embodiment. For Hadewijch, however, this is the opposite of the service of love, as the human soul lives more in and for itself than in and for the other. This may manifest itself, for example, when one seeks enjoyment (*ghebruken*) as an experience, which entails that the soul prefers itself to the other:

> Nowadays this is the way everyone loves himself; people wish to live with God in consolation and repose, in wealth and power, and to share the fruition of his glory. We all indeed wish to be God with God, but God knows there are few of us who want to live as men with his humanity, or

51 *Dus dolen wi arme ende onsalich ende ellendich ende bistierich in vreemden lande ende in swaren weghen, dies wi alle cleyne noet hadden en dadent die valsche die ons ane vechten in allen sinnen, daer wi daer bi tonen openbaer dat wi met christo niet en leuen alse hi leefde noch niet al en begheuen alsoe christus dede, noch van allen begheuen en sijn also christus was.* Hadewijch, *Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, p. 65 (1. 252–260). Hart (1980), p. 61.

> want to carry his cross with him, or to hang on the cross with him and pay humanity's debt to the full.[52]

Opting solely for the personal experience of enjoyment (*ghebruken*) is fundamentally to 'love oneself.' Carrying the cross with Simon of Cyrene—i.e., expecting a (possibly spiritual) reward for it—is fundamentally to 'love oneself.' Then one 'wanders miserable in a foreign land' because one is alienated from the real fatherland, namely, the life of Christ. The genuine service of love, in contrast, is love for God, which draws the human soul completely outside itself to live in the will of the Other. This service of love was fulfilled by Christ in his humanity, thereby returning humanity to its original dignity and freedom, unto which it is created. *Minne* is a reality that is fundamentally experienced in Christ and thus is fundamentally a life communion with Christ, in his humanity and in his divinity.

'Without Difference' (*Sonder differencie*)

We may add that Hadewijch occasionally describes radical union and life communion with Christ in remarkable terms. In her Seventh Vision, for example, she says the following concerning her union with Christ: 'it seems to me that at that moment, we were one without difference' (*Mi was op die ure ochte wi een waren sonder differencie*). This is related to what she says in her Seventeenth Letter. She describes how, on the Feast of Ascension, after the moment of consecration, she stands before the Father with Christ, and that the Father mistakes her, as it were, for Christ: 'He [the Father] took Him [the Son] for me, and me for Him' (*daer nam hi hem over mi ende mi over hem*). As the scribe of MS C notes in the margin: the Father took her to be His Son: *accepit eam pro filio*. The word 'seems' in the Seventh Vision is, of course, of great importance. Without this important qualification, Hadewijch's statement would suggest that she felt herself to be one with Christ to such an extent that she became Christ Himself. She says, however, that life communion with Christ is experienced so strongly that the distinction between Christ and her seems to dissolve on the experiential level. It thus is an experience of intense life communion, not of identity. Ruusbroec most probably borrowed his expression *without difference* from this

52 *Daer in mint nu elc hem seluen: in troeste ende in rasten ende in rijcheiden ende in moghentheiden met gode te leuene ende in siere ghebrukeleker glorileecheit te sine. Wi willen wel alle god met gode wesen. Mer, wet god, luttel es onser die mensche met siere minscheit wille leven ende sijn cruce met hem willen draghen ende met hem ane den cruce willen staen ende die scout der menscheit volghelden*. Hadewijch, *Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, p. 64 (1. 227–230). Hart (1980), p. 61.

passage.[53] Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Carthusians of Herne, who asked Ruusbroec to explain the expression, owned copies of Hadewijch's works.[54]

Vitae

In his general survey of mysticism in the Low Countries, Paul Verdeyen indicated that Ruusbroec knew William of Saint-Thierry's spiritual thought not only directly from his works but also indirectly, via the female movements.[55] The biographies (*Vitae*) of these women are important textual witnesses to these movements. Research interest in these *Vitae* and these women's spirituality has recently increased considerably.[56] In this contribution, it will suffice to refer to three examples that clearly illustrate how the spirituality of profound life communion with Christ—as described in William of Saint-Thierry's theology—is also present in these *Vitae*.

The first *mulier religiosa* about whom we have a striking testimony is Mary of Oignies. She was born in 1177 in Nivelles, Brabant, to wealthy parents who showed little understanding of the surprisingly religious lifestyle of their child. She married at 14 but continued to live an intensely religious life. This made a profound impression on her husband Jehan, and he was gradually inspired to live likewise. Despite the objection and derision of friends and family, the couple chose to devote themselves to the care of lepers in Willambroux, outside the town of Nivelles. In 1207, Mary settled at Oignies, not far from the present town of Charleroi. Not long before, in 1192, four brothers had founded a religious community there, which followed the rule of Augustine.[57] Their mother lived in the vicinity with a small group of *mulieres religiosae*, which Mary joined. We have no information about her husband, though he may already have been dead by this time. Mary's mystical prayer life had come to the attention of a number of people. For example, she was visited by Jacques de Vitry,

53 See also, however, Faesen (2013b & forthcoming).

54 In Jozef van Mierlo's Hadewijch edition, Manuscripts B (Brussels, KB 2877–78) and A (Brussels, KB 2879–80) are assumed to be manuscripts from Rooklooster. New codicological research has demonstrated, however, that both manuscripts—which were in the library of Rooklooster in approximately 1400—originated at the Charterhouse of Herne. MS B was made at Herne, using MS A as an exemplar, which was also in the library at Herne. Cf. Kwakkel (2002). MS A dates from between 1325 and 1350 and MS B from between 1350 and 1400. Ruusbroec's visit to Herne occurred in approximately 1360.

55 Verdeyen (1981b), p. 5.

56 Cf. Minnis & Voaden (2010).

57 Three of the four brothers were priests; the fourth, Hugo of Oignies, was a reputable goldsmith.

the later bishop-coadjutor of Liège, who was appointed cardinal and bishop of Acre (Palestine) by Pope Gregory IX. The visit left a marked impression on Jacques; after Mary's death in 1213, he wrote her *Vita*. The book focuses particularly on the mystical dimensions of her life, and Jacques is consequently considered the first exponent of the *vitae* genre of *mulieres religiosae* in the Diocese of Liège. As a result, these women became well known far outside the borders of the diocese.[58]

From the numerous descriptions in the *vita*, we may refer, by way of example, to one event. Almost in passing, Jacques de Vitry notes: 'Once, when she was in her cell, she heard the sweetest voice of the Lord say: "This is my beloved daughter, in whom I am well pleased" ' (*Haec est filia mea, in qua plurima delector*).[59] Given the wealth of wondrous religious experiences Jacques describes concerning Mary of Oignies, the reader might almost miss this brief statement, and yet it is important. It is clearly a striking example of a Christ-like experience. Obviously, the voice Mary hears is the voice of the Father, which spoke the same words after Jesus' baptism in the Jordan: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (*Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacui*, cf. Mt. 3:17). The Father repeated this statement during the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor (cf. Mt. 17:5). Mary of Oignies thus experiences being loved by the Father as the Son is loved by Him.

A second noteworthy figure is Ida of Nivelles. She was born in 1197 in Nivelles. At nine years old, her parents wished her to marry against her will, and she fled from their house at night with only some clothes and her psalter of the Blessed Virgin. Between the ages of nine and sixteen, she lived in the small community of *mulieres religiosae* that had settled near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and devoted itself to caring for the sick. The young girl assumed the task of begging for her companions. In 1213, Ida went to study at the Cistercian house of Kerkom (near Tienen), which moved to La Ramée (Jauchelette) the following year. In 1215, Ida became a novice, and in the summer of the next year she was professed as a nun. Shortly afterwards, she met Beatrice of Nazareth, who had moved to the convent for a brief period. Beatrice soon came to regard Ida as her spiritual mother. Ida died in 1231 at only thirty-four years old. Her *vita* contains many descriptions of her mystical experiences, of which two are particularly revealing for our present discussion.

Goswin de Bossut, her biographer, reports these words from Ida:

---

58 Cf. Scheepsma (2008), p. 85. One may suggest, however, that the much older (anonymous) *Vita* of Aldegonde of Maubeuge was very influential. See Opgenhaffen (2013).

59 Jacques of Vitry, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensi* (1867), col. 567D.

> I was once spending some days in the infirmary, incapacitated by a bodily weakness but also by the sheer strength of love, of insatiable longing, for the supreme divinity. My heart grew hot within me and in my innermost core a fire burst forth (Ps. 38:4), not a consuming fire but an enlightening and enflaming one (Antiphon: Pentecost). Suddenly there stood before me a man, venerable of mien and robed in a cloak of purest white. From his mouth issued a fluid, appetizing to look at, white in colour, seemingly comparable to the manna. This man was gazing upon me with gracious familiarity and he said: 'My dearest, you have been longing vehemently to learn as much as is allowable of the unspeakable knowledge of my divinity and to relish its sweetness. I in turn shall most willingly fulfill that burning desire of your soul. I shall instill and let drip bountifully into your heart this tastiest of honeycombs, which is that of my divinity.' This said, he took some of the fluid issuing from his mouth and dripped it into my own. Immediately my soul was inwardly lit up with an awareness of the blessed Trinity, so great, so sweet, so divine, that the level of acquaintanceship granted me that day has remained in me ever since.[60]

Ida lies sick in bed; she is physically ill, but it appears that she is especially 'sick with love,' like the bride in the Song of Songs (Sg. 2:5). Moreover, she specifies that she suffers from an 'unquenchable desire for God.' She is enflamed with a burning desire for God, and to know God—though it is not a distant, merely intellectual knowledge. A man suddenly appears in the infirmary, and from the description, he is clearly Christ. The man looks royal, and, rather unusually, a white liquid pours from his mouth. From what follows, it becomes clear that this liquid refers to Christ's divine life. This initially strange representation

60 *Contigit me quadam vice per aliquot dies infirmari in infirmitorio tam infirmitate corporis, quam valido amore et insatiabili desiderio diuinitatis. Cum autem hoc modo incalesceret cor meum intra me, et in praecordiis meis exardesceret ignis non consumens, sed illuminans et inflammans: ecce subito astitit mihi vir quidam venerabilis aspectu, clamide candidissima circumamictus de cuius ore manabat liquor quidam aspectu delectabilis, qui candidus tamquam manna esse videbatur. Cumque idem vir gratiosa quadam familiaritate me intueretur, dixit mihi: Tu desiderasti vehementer, o carissima mea, cognoscere et sapere inexperta licet ineffabilem meae diuinitatis notitiam, et ego libentissime, ut ardentissimum animae tuae desiderium adimpleatur, super omnia sapidissimum diuinitatis meae fauum cordi tuo ad cumulum instillabo. Quo dicto sumpsit liquorem de ore suo emanentem et stillavit in os meum. Statimque tanta dulcedine et cognitione diuina illustrata est interius anima mea, quod a die illa et deinceps, quantum mihi scire concessum est, beatae Trinitatis agnitionem consecuta sum. Vita Idae de Nivellis* (1630), pp. 254–255. Translation in Cawley (2003), p. 65.

is probably to be interpreted in light of Gospel passages such as Lk. 4:22 ('All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth') and Lk. 6:45 ('It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks').

Evidently, the central point of this visionary event is that Christ invites Ida to share his divine life—in a particularly intimate way: he lets the liquid ('tastiest honey') drip from his mouth into Ida's. Thanks to this intimate contact with Christ, Ida shares in the divine life of the Trinity, and she has a specific knowledge of the Trinitarian life.

Another short passage from her biography clarifies how this knowledge is to be understood. After a wondrous experience, one of her sisters asked Ida what had happened:

> She replied that she had been raptured into the pure divinity and had, in that rapture, tasted and sensed the blessed Trinity in a measure beyond that of any experience she had previously perceived. She also did her best to explain how it had been revealed to her that the essence of the father was in the Son, that of the Son in the Father and that of the Holy Spirit in them both. She added that the blessed Trinity had deigned to converse with her in the gentle whisperings of a lover to his beloved, and that she too had spoken to the blessed Trinity with all the sweet friendliness of a beloved to her lover.[61]

This passage contains concise references to a number of central elements that are developed extensively in Brabantine mystical literature. Ida first describes what she experienced. She was carried up—the passive form is important—into God Himself, and this experience differs fundamentally from any other experience. Incidentally, this discontinuity is often emphasized by mystical authors. Ida then interprets this experience: the being of the Father in the Son, of the Son in the Father, and of the Holy Spirit in them both was revealed to her. Ida thus explicitly confirms that her experience was fundamentally to share in the Trinitarian life. The expression she uses is striking, and to understand it correctly we must assume that the text does not refer to 'essence' as *essen-*

61 *Respondit se raptam fuisse in puram divinitatem, seque in raptu illo gustasse et sensisse de beata Trinitate super omnem experientiam quam antea perceperat. Exponens quemadmodum poterat dixit sibi revelatam fuisse essentiam Patris in Filio, et Filii in Patre et Spiritus Santi in utroque. Et adiiciens dixit beatam Trinitatem tamquam dilectum cum dilecta dulciter secum allocutam fuisse. Seque beatae Trinitati dulciter etiam et amabiliter fuisse conversatam. Vita Idae de Nivellis* (1630), p. 271. Translation in Cawley (2003), p. 77 (slightly modified).

tia as it is used in scholastic thought ('the *essentia* is specifically that which is indicated by the definition'[62]). Rather, the expression is a translation of the Middle Dutch *wesen*, which means 'to be' or 'existence,' though understood not statically but dynamically; the 'life' referred to in the prologue of John's Gospel ('What has come into being in him was life,' Jn. 1:3–4).[63] Ida thus refers to the fact that the Son *lives* in the Father, and the Father in the Son, and the Spirit in them both.[64] Apparently seeing the need for further clarification, Ida uses a comparison from the Song of Songs: the conversation of loving partners. From her perspective, this was apparently the best metaphor to describe the intimacy and intensity of the mutual loving abandonment and enjoyment.[65]

Finally, we refer to a brief but significant passage from the *vita* of a third Cistercian, namely, Ida of Leuven. She was most probably born in 1211, the daughter of a successful wine merchant in Leuven. She received many mystical graces, even the stigmata. After an extended period devoted to acts of charity in Leuven, while living with her family, she entered the Cistercian convent of Rozendaal (near Mechelen). The date of her death is unknown. In her *vita*, written by her anonymous confessor who had access to Ida's personal notes, we read the following significant passage:

> One day, when the blessed virgin [Ida] was outside herself in ecstasy, she received a vision in her spirit. She saw her soul as a spacious temple, which became wider and wider on the inside, so that in its expansive dimension—both its length and breadth—it looked like a magnificent church. She was able to look at it on the inside, and while, astounded, she was carefully and keenly examining all the wondrous details, thinking she had never beheld such a beautiful sight, she turned her gaze to the altar from which the most beautiful thing of all shone out [...] On the other side, she saw the priest approaching the altar, dressed in the ceremonial vestments [...] This priest was the true and highest Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Jesus Christ, perfect God and man, born of the Virgin Mary.[66]

62 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 29, a. 2, ad 3.

63 Cf. Deblaere (2004a), pp. 3–31.

64 *Ego in Patre et Pater in Me* (Jn. 14:10, cf. 14:19–21; 10:38 and 17:21).

65 Cf. Faesen (2004a), pp. 329–344.

66 *Tempore quodam in excessu mentis erepta virgo beatissima, vidit in spiritu suam ipsius animam ad instar templi latissimi, per omnes sui partes introrsus extendi, porrectisque dimensionibus, in longum pariter et latum ad eminentis cujusdam ecclesiae similitudinem dilatari: in cujus medio constituta, cum aciem oculorum ad singula quaeque lustranda mira sagacitate vigilique curiositate deflecteret, et nullum in hoc mundo venustius se relegaret*

This narrative is notable because it recounts how Ida saw Christ enter the sanctuary of her soul to celebrate Mass. This is a visual, visionary expression of the idea that Christ is a living presence *within* the human person, and that this living presence consists in surrendering oneself to the Father. Indeed, this is how Ida and her contemporaries interpreted the Eucharist: an actualization of the self-sacrifice of Christ on the cross. In other words, Ida sees that the inner life of the human person is a vast and sacred space for the love of the Son, who gifts himself to the Father. This vision contains a particularly concise and incisive treatment of the spirituality of life communion with Christ and its far-reaching anthropological consequences.

Limburg Sermons

In his edition of Ruusbroec's *Realm*, Joseph Alaerts indicated that Ruusbroec probably knew the eleventh (pp. 35–40) of the so-called *Limburgsche Sermoenen* and that the *Realm* contains a number of clear references to this text. The collection of the *Limburgsche Sermoenen*[67] consists of a number of Middle Dutch texts and a number of Middle Dutch translations of Middle German texts.[68] The eleventh sermon belongs to the latter category (*St. George Sermons*). Since the manuscript history is obscure, we do not know whether Ruusbroec had access to all the sermons or only the texts originally in Middle Dutch.

Wybren Scheepsma has conducted extensive research into the sermons.[69] The collection comprises 48 texts compiled in a 13th-century manuscript.[70] Scheepsma situates the works in the remarkable flourishing of spiritual literature in Liège-Brabant in this period, especially in Cistercian circles. The collec-

[…] *Videbat indutum pontificalibus appropinquantem ad altare pontificem* […] *Fuit ipse verus et summus Pontifex et Sacerdos secundem ordinem Melchisedech, perfectus Deus et homo, natus ex Maria virgine Dominus Jesus Christus*. *Vita Idae de Lovanio* (1866), col. 180C–D.

67 Kern (1895).

68 Sermons 32–39, 41–46, and 48 were originally in Middle Dutch.

69 Scheepsma (2008).

70 The editor of the Limburg Sermons, J.H. Kern, initially dated the manuscript to the 14th century, but J.P. Gumbert demonstrated that it dates from the 13th century, Gumbert (1987), p. 181.

tion also includes the *Seven manieren van minne* and various other texts that bear a striking resemblance to Hadewijch's oeuvre.[71]

Although not all the texts in the collection concern mystical thought or theology, they evince a predominant orientation to mysticism and contemplation. This is the case in some shorter passages from the translations of the *St George Sermons*[72] and also in the Middle Dutch texts. We refer here to a few passages by way of example.

In *The Book on the Orchard* (*Dbuec vanden boegarde*), we find a passage containing metaphors from the Song of Songs that appears to refer to *lectulus noster floridus* (Sg. 1:16):

> This bed is a glowing desire, flowing from the marrow of the heart. The first sheet on this bed is pure conscience without qualms, the second is union, freed from all other cares, to enjoy only this chosen bridegroom, the Lord Jesus. The maid whose name is wisdom makes this bed with a cover in four shades of purple. The first is the obedience of love, the second is the innocence of nobility, the third the endurance of riches and the fourth the meekness of knowledge. The pillow on this bed is the drunken forgetfulness of all that has been and all that will be. When the bed is thus made, the adorned bride is joyfully brought and sweetly helped to sleep with her noble bridegroom. Love helps her into bed, and delight covers her and closes her eyes; and they rest. The soul is embraced and kissed by her beloved, whom she has so longingly and yearningly desired, and then she embraces him ecstatically with ardent desire.[73]

71 Sermon 39 (Kern (1895), p. 538 (1. 7–15)) is very close to Hadewijch's Letter 1 (1. 17–36) (*Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, pp. 16–17). Sermon 41 (Kern (1895), p. 568 (1. 1–570, 1. 24)) is almost identical to Hadewijch's Letter 10 (*Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, pp. 85–91), and Sermon 43 (Kern (1895), p. 596 (1. 15–597, 1. 2)) is almost identical to Hadewijch's Letter 18 (1. 174–201) (*Brieven* (1947), vol. 1, pp. 159–160).

72 Alluding to Augustine, Sermon 45 says that in taking the Eucharist, we are transformed into Christ and live eternally in God (Kern (1895), p. 551 (1. 10–17)). Sermon 18 refers to the thirst for God and the desire for immediate encounter with Him, with expressions that are similar to Beatrice's seventh manner of love (ibid., p. 383 (1. 11)–p. 384 (1. 10)). Sermon 20 describes the birth of God in the soul (ibid., p. 395 (1. 11–12)) and mutual indwelling between God and the human person (ibid., p. 399 (1. 16–18)). Sermon 31 refers to an experience of spiritual sweetness that overwhelms the soul (ibid., p. 452 (1. 15)–p. 453 (1. 6)).

73 *Dit bedde muet wesen gluiende begerde, ut vlůiende utin marge dis herten. Deen lilaken van desen bedde sal wesen reine consciëntie sonder knaginge, dander sal wesen enegheit, genegt te sine van allen vremden sorgen, ombe te gebrukene eneglike dis utvercorend brudegomen, Heren Jhesus. Die joncfrouwe die wisheit geheten es, si dect dit bedde met eenre koverturen*

Nine Kinds of Love (*Negenerhande minne*) refers to 'love without a why' (*minne sonder waeromme*). Just as in the text of Beatrice of Nazareth, it is here designated as 'for naught' (*te vergeves*):

> Third, we love God for Himself when we find no reason why outside Him, when we do not love Him for the good He may bestow or has bestowed or will bestow, but rather because He is goodness in Himself, purely for Himself; not for what he gives or might give, not because he loves or loved or will love us, but because he is loveable in Himself and worthy of all love. Such love is called love 'for naught' because it serves and demands no reward [...] In this love rests the blessed soul, God's faithful lover, in great bliss and in great delight. But because the hour she may remain there is short, as long as she is loaded with the burden of this mortal body and is imprisoned in this wretched vale of miserable exile, she must be cleft from the one she longs to be with, and must return to the place she loathes. She thus often descends from great joy into great sorrow.[74]

On the Blessed Soul (*Van der heiliger selen*) concludes thus:

> Now return to your heart, and let it not freeze in its sloth, warm it with the fire of ignited devotion, awaken it with great compunction, raise it in

---

van virehande purpere. Deen is gehorsamheit van minnen, dander onnoselgheit van edelheide, terde stadecheit van verwentheide, tfirde sagtmudecheit van wetentheide. Dorkussen van desen bedde sal wesen vergetenheit van dronkenscape van alle dien dat gewest heeft ende es ende nog wesen sal. Als dit bedde aldus gemact es, so halense die verwende brut met groter joien ende helpense slapen sutelike met haren edelen brudegome. Minne helpt har op, ende genugde dectse ende luct har dogen; ende si rasten. Dus wert die sile behelst ende gekust van haren geminde, diense so begerlike ende so doientlike begert heft, ende dan helst sine weder ende niet har sins, met eenre starcker begerden. Kern (1895), p. 544 (1. 10–29).

74 *Ten derden male minwi gode ombe hem selver alse wi die warumbe nit en nemen buten heme, alse win nit en minnen ombet gut dat hi ons dut ocht gedaen heft ocht dun sal, mar ombe dat hi gut es in hem selver, purlike ombe hem selver; nit omb dat hi geft ocht geven mach, nit ombe dat hi mint ocht gemint heft ocht dat hi ons minnen sal, mar dat hi so minlike es in hem selver ende alre minnen werdech es. Dusgedane minne heit tevergeves gemint; want si dint, ende en heischt engegen loen* [...] *In derre minnen rost die salege sile, Gots getruwe minnerse, in groter walheit ende in groter genugden. Mar ombe dat die ure cort es dassire in bliven mach, als lange alse verladen es metter burdenen dis sterfelics lighamen ende gekerkert mut wesen in dit jamerlike dal dis druven ellents, ende si sceden mut van dien darse so gerne ware, ende weder comen mut darse so over noede es, so comptse decke van groter welden in grote welicheit.* Kern (1895), pp. 564–565.

> desiring love, close it to all worldly cares, so that your messengers may tell your friend, like the spiritual bride [in the Song of Songs], that you languish in his love. Prepare the room of your heart for his coming, so that he comes all the faster. And when he has come, receive him so tenderly and hold him so longingly that you can lament your want.[75]

Gheraert Appelmans

Although he is little known, Gheraert Appelmans was (presumably) one of Ruusbroec's immediate predecessors. In 1927, Leonce Reypens published Appelmans' only known treatise,[76] which is extant in only one manuscript (Brussels, KB 3067–3073)—known in Ruusbroec scholarship as Manuscript Vv.[77] The copyist provides the following introduction: 'This is the gloss on the Our Father by Brother Gheraert Appelmans,' adding in the margin: 'who lives near a place called R***, and there, in a forest, does rigorous penance.'[78] Reypens was unable to identify the place name damaged by the binding (*rijc . . . re*), but he assumed that the copyist was from Brabant who used an exemplar originating in the eastern Low Countries. Reypens casts doubt over all but Appelmans' name. The text as published is unlikely to be the autograph; it is rather a copy (dated 'mid-14th-century' by de Vreese), and the original must thus have been older. Appelmans was probably known by the copyist of the original text, but not by the copyist of the extant manuscript. Reypens suggests that Appelmans lived between approximately 1250 and 1325, making him older than Ruusbroec. Reypens further assumed that Appelmans had received extensive theological

75 *Nu keert weder tuwen herten, ende en laetse nit bevrisen in hare tracheit, verwermse metten vure der ontfencder devocien, verweckerse met starker compunctien, rigtse op in begertliker minnen, slutse jhegen allen wereltliken commer, soe dat u boden mogen seghen tuwen vrinde, metter gesteliker brut, dat gi quelt van sinre minnen. Gereit de kamere van uwen herten jhegen dat hi comen sal, opdat hi te haesteliker come. Ende als hi comen es, soe ontfaten so liflic ende hauten so begerlic dat gi hem clagen mogt u noet*. Kern (1895), p. 625 (1. 24–35).

76 Reypens (1927a+b). The text was mentioned by Willem de Vreese in his description of the manuscript containing the text: de Vreese (1900–1902), pp. 657–658.

77 This manuscript, part of the collection at Rooklooster, is one of the oldest in the transmission of Ruusbroec's work (see the chapter by Guido de Baere in this volume). It is a composite volume of ten individual manuscripts containing the texts of *Little Book, Stone*, and *Rungs*. It is also one of the few manuscripts containing the text of Beatrice's *Seven Manners*.

78 Rolfson (2008), p. 66. *Dit es de glose op den pater noster broeder gheraerts appelmans, die leegt bi eere stat die rijc*[. . .]*re heet ende doet daer swaer penitentie in een wout*. Reypens (1927a), p. 83.

formation, probably in a monastic order (perhaps the Dominicans), and that he was influential in spiritual circles.

This difficult text has been researched relatively little.[79] Stefanus Axters[80] and Kurt Ruh were the only two authors to research it extensively after Reypens' 1927 study. Ruh devoted an important chapter to the *Gloss* in his *Geschichte der abendländische Mystik*. In 2008, Helen Rolfson translated it into English,[81] and a French translation has been published by Georgette Épiney-Burgard.[82]

To a great extent, Axters simply followed Reypens' interpretation, though he provided a number of additions. Concerning the geographic location, he suggested the manuscript referred to Rijkel (near Sint Truiden). Axters further posited that Appelmans may have worked in pastoral service, given his emphasis on the apostolic meaning of mysticism. Research into the *Gloss*, however, has predominantly focused on the chronology of its writing and unfortunately has been tainted by a nationalist agenda. Following Reypens, Axters argued that Appelmans appeared to be independent of Eckhart.[83] This would later lead to the hypothesis that Eckhart was influenced by Appelmans. Axters defined the issue by indicating a number of specific terms in his *Scholastiek Lexicon*,[84] on the basis of which he questions:

> This presents us with a highly captivating problem in the cultural history of Dutch-speaking peoples. Did Meister Eckhart know Appelmans, Hadewijch and Beatrice, and adopt their terminology or did our Netherlandish mystics and Eckhart merely draw on a common, generally used vocabulary?[85]

Although Axters explicitly left the question open, it was nonetheless interpreted as an affirmation. In 1969, Emil Öhman noted: 'Damit will er diese

79 An excellent overview of the research is provided in van der Kolk (2008).

80 Axters (1953), pp. 132–138. Stracke (1936) also briefly discussed the *Gloss*—in line with Reypens' positions.

81 Rolfson (2008), pp. 66–75.

82 Épiney-Burgard (1998).

83 Reypens (1927a), p. 137.

84 Axters (1937), pp. 14*–17*, supplemented by van der Kolk (2008).

85 'Dit stelt ons voor een hoogst innemend probleem uit de cultuurgeschiedenis van den Dietschen stam. Heeft namelijk Meester Eckhart Appelmans, Hadewijch, Beatrijs, gekend en van hun vaktaal bediend of hebben hier onze Nederlandsche mystici evenzeer als Eckhart alleen aan een gemeenschappelijken algemeen gebruikten woordenschat geput?' Axters (1937), p. 26*.

Ausdrücke offenbar dem Einfluss von Appelmans auf Eckhart zuschreiben.'[86] Several decades later, Georgette Épiney-Burgard treated the same question.[87] She opined that it is difficult to distinguish whether Appelmans knew Eckhart's work and that the reverse is improbable, considering that the *Gloss* was only transmitted in one manuscript.[88] Nevertheless, a number of expressions in the *Gloss* are similar to Eckhart's first German sermon, from which Épiney-Burgard concludes: 'We may consider Gerard Appelmans an intermediary figure between the beguines and John of Ruusbroec, providing the latter with theological vocabulary and Trinitarian thought inspired by the Dominican Master.'[89] Kurt Ruh rejected this conclusion, presenting an entirely different perspective. On the one hand, he notes the similarity of terms in the *Gloss* and Eckhart. On the other, the *Gloss*' specific vocabulary is absent from Beatrice and Hadewijch, though there are parallel expressions in Ruusbroec's *Espousals*. He notes: 'It is difficult to imagine that all these concepts and many others have only a Dutch tradition, which we would have to assume if the *Gloss* is free of any influence of Eckhartian mysticism.'[90] He therefore prefers the hypothesis that Appelmans wrote after Ruusbroec, indicated by the lexicological similarity with the *Espousals*. In this regard, however, we must note that new codicological research has been conducted into Manuscript Vv, demonstrating that the compilation (consisting of 12 different sections) is of complex derivation. The section containing the *Gloss* bears the book-plate of the convent at Rooklooster near Brussels but was certainly not written there. Its place of origin is unknown, the language of the copyists of this section was Brabantine, and yet the text contains a number of German equivalents for Middle Dutch words. Codicological details indicate that the section was probably owned by a German before finding its way to the library at Rooklooster.[91] In other words,

86 Öhmann (1969), p. 352.

87 Épiney-Burgard (1998), p. 125.

88 This does not imply, however, that it is impossible for Eckhart to have read Appelmans.

89 'On pourrait considérer Gérard Appelmans comme un intermédiaire entre les béguines et Jan van Ruusbroec, lui apportant un vocabulaire théologique et une pensée trinitaire inspirée du Maître Dominicain.' Épiney-Burgard (1998), p. 125.

90 'Es fällt swer, sich vor zu stellen, daß alle diese Begriffe und viele andere nur eine niederländische Tradition haben sollen, was man annehmen muß, wenn die Glose frei vom Einfluß der Eckhartischen Mystik ist.' Épiney-Burgard (1998), p. 148. This argument is somewhat tenuous given that it assumes authors must necessarily use older traditions literally.

91 Kwakkel (2002), p. 227. In fact, the manuscript contains occasional German translations of the text in the margins, as indicated in Reypens' edition, e.g., at I, 20 (p. 86), II, 9 (p. 87), II, 3 (p. 89), etc.

it may originally have been a Middle Dutch text, which eventually made its way to Rooklooster via this copy dated *c.*1350[92] (which belonged to a German community). It is thus chronologically unlikely, though not impossible, that the *Gloss* was written after the *Espousals*. Indeed, new research indicates that the *Espousals* was only completed after 1350.[93]

Additionally, we may note that the name Appelmans appeared in the census of 1321 and referred to as a hermit living in the Sonian Forest.[94]

The mystical content of the text has been discussed primarily by Reypens and Axters. The Trinitarian aspects are particularly striking. One might say that the entire treatise is a reflection on the Fatherhood of God, in which participation in the life of the Son is essential to understanding and experiencing this Fatherhood directly. Axters rightly remarks: 'Appelmans primarily attempts to explain God's fatherhood' (pp. 133–134). The text's fundamental reflection is that the Father bears the Son[95] from the fruitfulness of His nature, and that He is not the Father solely of the Only-Begotten Son but also of humanity as such, as 'sons of grace.' Worshipping the Father as Father implies 'sinking away in an abyss.' Appelmans' treatise is an exploration of this premise.

In the first step, he describes the Father as total transcendence,[96] the origin of the Trinity—as Deblaere indicates, however, Appelmans uses the notable term *overbliven*, which is obviously related to Ruusbroec's *overwesen*.[97] Further, the Father is only Father because he has a Son, born of the fruitfulness of his nature:[98] the Son is therefore 'the name of the Father.' Humans are 'sons of grace,' and the Only-Begotten Son demonstrates the fulfillment of this Fatherhood. The Father's realm consists of the Son, and of all those who love

92 Kwakkel (2002), p. 228.

93 Kienhorst & Kors (2001).

94 Communicated by Michel Erkens. The reference is in Martens (1958), p. 110. There are a number of names in the Sonian Forest that may correspond to the '*rijc*…' in the manuscript. Further research is required in this regard.

95 Cf. e.g., *Espousals* c127f.

96 Appelmans refers to God as an 'is' (*es*), Reypens (1927a), p. 104 (l. 6). It is impossible, however, for a human being to know what this means: 'In this word, all created spirits are silenced and must acknowledge that we know nothing,' Rolfson (2008), p. 68, *in dese woerde* [=*du bist*] *verstommen alle ghescapene gheeste ende wi moeten lien: wi en weten*, Reypens (1927a), p. 89, r. 2–3. The human person as a created being is a *non-being*: 'were God to withdraw what is his from us for one instant, we should quickly be led into the temptation of eternal death' Rolfson (2008), p. 74; *ochte god dat sine van ons name enen oghenblic, dat wi saen werden gheleidt in die becoeringhe des ewechs doeds*, Reypens (1927a), p. 104, r. 8–10. Cf. Ruusbroec, *Espousals* b43–47.

97 Cf. Deblaere (2004a), p. 9.

98 Cf. Reypens (1927a), p. 87 (l. 4–9); cf. also pp. 89–91 (l. 12–22). The fruitfulness of the Father's nature is central to Ruusbroec's thought. See, e.g., *Realm* 1597–1611.

the Father and are reborn in the Son.[99] This rebirth is only available to those who dedicate themselves entirely to God, i.e., those who are sunk away and dead to themselves. This occurs when the will is one with the Father's will. Humans then become one body with the Son, 'sons in the Son,' and one Spirit with God.

In the second step, Appelmans further elaborates this. All humanity has it received from God, and it is received daily, as a noble gift. Appelmans' 'daily' may be understood on three levels: temporally, spiritually (God speaks his Word in us, and this is a foretaste of eternity),[100] and perfectly. The latter is God Himself: He gives Himself to humanity entirely in the eternal 'now.' The realization that one receives everything from God on every level may lead to poverty of the spirit, a total receptivity, and to a co-loving with the Son.[101]

Finally, Appelmans affirms that this applies to every human person, even to the holiest, such as Mary who was immaculately conceived.

Strikingly, this text allies fundamental theological reflections with expressions that strongly evoke the mystical experience they describe. Two passages may serve as illustrations:

> When the Father has possessed the whole breath of the rational soul and has taken over and absorbed the essence and eternity of the soul and all its powers into the fathomless divinity of his glory's lordship, the soul sinks from one abyss into the other, and from something into nothing.[102]

And:

> We will enjoy him blessedly above faith and above time and above modes in this 'day' of eternity.[103]

---

99 *In der gheboerten des vader es alles dat die vader bekint, in sire grondeloeser ewigher wijsheit, utevlietende metten sone ende wedergheboren in den sone metten sone sonelike bekinnende*, cf. the explanatory note in Reypens (1927a), p. 88, and a comparable point in Ruusbroec, e.g., *Tabernacle* 4:172–177.

100 Here he briefly refers to the Eucharist, Reypens (1927a), p. 98 (1. 53–55).

101 Appelmans states that these people do not become saviors themselves (*niet dat si met haerre verdienten ons loessen vander ewegher doet*), Reypens (1927a), p. 103 (1. 66–68).

102 Rolfson (2008), p. 67. *Alse den vader beseten heeft alle de wide des vernuefts gheests ende ouernomen ende inghenomen heeft wesen ende ewecheit des gheests ende alle sine cracht in die grondeloese godlijcheit dire heerscap sire eren, so sinct die gheest van dien afgronde in dat afgront ende van den yete in een niet*. Reypens (1927a), p. 86 (1. 28–34).

103 Rolfson (2008), p. 71. *Wi werden sijns ghenietende bouen gheloue ende bouen tijt ende bouen wise salechlike in desen daghe der ewecheit*. Reypens (1927a), p. 98 (1. 57–58).

Marguerite Porete

Marguerite, nicknamed 'Porete' (*Margarita dicta Porete*), is presumed to have been from the region of Valenciennes.[104] She is referred to as a *beguina*, though what precisely this means is unclear.[105] Practically nothing is known about her life, though she is thought to have received an excellent, perhaps even aristocratic, education. In the early 14th century, a conflict arose between Marguerite and the ecclesiastical hierarchy concerning her book *Le Mirouer des simples ames anienties et qui seulement demourent en vouloir et desir d'amour*,[106] which the bishop of Cambrai condemned. The date of this first condemnation is not known, but it must have occurred prior to 1306. At some earlier date, however, the book had been approved by three readers, including a monk of Villers and Godfrey of Fontaines, a renowned theologian at the University of Paris. Notwithstanding the bishop of Cambrai's censure, Marguerite continued to circulate her book, for which she was later tried and executed in Paris in 1310. Despite this radical condemnation,[107] the *Mirror* continued to copied and circulated throughout the Middle Ages. 'It appears as if dozens of copies of the Mirror were bobbing up continually in the seas of late-medieval western Europe like unsinkable corks.'[108] Research into the *Mirror* has focused predominantly on Marguerite's condemnation and the question of the extent to which the *Mirror* may justifiably be considered representative of the movement of the Free Spirit. Secondary studies focusing on Marguerite's mystical theology as such are relatively rare.[109]

In a short but significant article, Paul Verdeyen posits that John of Ruusbroec was probably familiar with the *Mirror*:

> It is by no means certain that Ruusbroec knew of Marguerite's tragic life. We are, however, confident that we can demonstrate that he read her anonymously transmitted work, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, at least in part, and provided it with necessary glosses.[110]

---

104 See the extensive overview of Porete research in Sargent (2010). Important historical insights are provided in Lerner (2010).

105 Particularly in light of Chapter 122 of the *Mirror*, in which she claims that the beguines rejected her.

106 Porete, *Mirouer* (1986).

107 According to McGinn, 'the first documented case of an execution for mystical heresy in Western Christianity.' See McGinn (1998).

108 Lerner (2010), p. 116.

109 Hahn-Jooß (2010) and Arblaster & Faesen (2012, 2013b).

110 Verdeyen (1992), p. 88.

Verdeyen argues first that the errors Ruusbroec describes in *Espousals* (b2414–b2460; b2476–b2484; b2530–b2544) correspond to the content of passages from the *Mirror*. Though there are no literal quotations, Verdeyen indicates textual similarities. Considering that a number of elements in Ruusbroec's description are not to be found in the *Mirror*, Verdeyen concludes that Ruusbroec also wrote against the groups who used the *Mirror*, namely, the adherents of the Free Spirit.

Nevertheless, Verdeyen notes that Ruusbroec does not simply reject the *Mirror* out of hand. He studied the text carefully, and adopted many of its insights:

> We refer to the merchants of the spiritual life (*Mirror* 57 and 63), to mystical union with means (*Mirror* 1 and 77) and without means (*Mirror* 5 and 74), to the nakedness of the soul (*Mirror* 133 and 134), to the common person (*Mirror* 22, 24 and 25: *anima communis*) and the annihilation of the human faculties in the encounter with God.[111]

There are numerous textual connections between the *Mirror* and Ruusbroec's work. The *Stone* especially contains expressions and themes that not only allude to the *Mirror* but also occasionally quote it literally. Extensive research has yet to be conducted in this regard. We shall limit our discussion to a number of reflections concerning Marguerite's fundamental presupposition, namely, that the soul may potentially share in God's Trinitarian life through love. To achieve this goal, the soul must unite its will entirely to the will of the beloved Other, and abandon all other motives than His will (ch. 7)—which, naturally, Reason fails to understand (ch. 8). This total submission to the divine will has occasionally, though incorrectly, been interpreted as a repudiation of the moral life. Some have labeled Marguerite a quietist and antinomianist ('saying farewell to the virtues'). The *Mirror* occasionally gives rise to such misunderstandings, due to its paradoxical expressions. And yet, Marguerite's position is perfectly clear and explicit in this regard: love by no means rejects the commandments of God, but rather adopts them as its foundation: 'Therefore we will begin here, says Love, with the commandments of Holy Church, so that everyone may find nourishment in this book with the help of God.'[112]

---

111 Verdeyen (1992), p. 95.

112 *Pource ycy commencerons, dist Amour, aux commendementz de Saincte Eglise, affin que checun puisse en ce livre prandre sa pasture o l'ayde de Dyeu.* Porete, *Mirouer* (1986), p. 16 (1. 3–5).

The submission of love makes the soul share in the life of the Son, and thus in the entire Trinity. Marguerite's expression is reminiscent of the passage in the *vita* of Marie of Oignies, referred to above:

> But you say it, you who are my dear love, says the person of God the Father, for my eldest daughter, the heiress of my kingdom, must be thus; she knows the secrets of the Son through the love of the Holy Spirit, who has given himself to this Soul.[113]

Marguerite does not present participation in the Trinitarian life as the soul's natural condition; such participation is entirely related to *amour*. In this regard, Marguerite introduces the notion of transformation through love, by which the soul is transformed by love into love itself, in its fundamental relationality—a theme adopted and developed by Ruusbroec in his doctrine of 'transformation' (*overforminghe*): 'This nature is so well-ordered through transformation in the union of Love, to whom this Soul's will is joined, that nature never asks anything that is forbidden.'[114] Marguerite maintains a careful balance between what God is by nature and what the soul becomes by grace, resulting in the following conception of deification:

> I am God, says Love, for Love is God and God is Love, and this soul is God by the condition of love, and I am God by divine nature, and this Soul is God by righteousness of love.[115]

Consequently, in the most profound union of love, the soul rests in God:

> This Soul, says Love, is completely brought back, melted and drawn, joined and united to the high Trinity; and it cannot will anything other

113 *Mais vous le dictes, vous qui Estes m'amye chere, dit la personne de Dieu le Pere, pource que ytelle doit estre mon aisnee fille, qui est heritere de mon royaulme, qui scet les secrez du Filz par amour du Saint Esperit, qui de luy a ceste Ame cy dounee.* Porete, *Mirouer* (1986), p. 150 (1. 21–25).

114 *Telle nature est si bien ordonnee par tranformacion d'unité d'Amour, a laquelle la voulenté de ceste Ame est conjoincte, que la nature ne demand chose qui soit deffendue.* Porete, *Mirouer* (1986), p. 32 (1. 22–25).

115 *Je suis Dieu, dit Amour, car Amour est Dieu, et Dieu est Amour, et ceste Ame est Dieu par condicion d'amour, et je suis Dieu par nature divine, et ceste Ame l'est par droicture d'amour.* Porete, *Mirouer* (1986), p. 82 (1. 44–47).

> than the divine will, through the divine work of the whole Trinity. And a rapturous clarity and light join it and draw it ever nearer.[116]

Marguerite describes the ultimate consequence of the transformation in love in her 'sixth state' in Chapter 118 of the *Mirror* (the seventh is reserved for the life of glory, after death), in which Marguerite describes God's contemplation of Himself in the soul. He is entirely in the soul—without, however, fusing with it—and the soul lives in and from God:

> But this Soul, so pure and enlightened, sees neither God nor itself, but God sees himself of himself in her, for her, without her [...] And therefore, this Soul knows none but him, and loves none but him, and praises none but him, for there is nothing but him [...] And therefore, Goodness of its goodness sees itself by divine light in the sixth state, in which the Soul is enlightened. And so there is none who is except he who is, who sees himself in this being by his divine majesty, through the transformation of love through his goodness poured out and returned to him. And therefore he sees himself in such a creature, without appropriating anything from the creature; all is his own, but his very own.[117]

Marguerite expresses the Trinity's radical transcendence and yet radical presence in the soul using the term *Loingprés*, which she uses as a proper name for the Trinity. God reveals Himself as such, namely, by 'opening' the soul:

> The sixth is glorious, for the opening of the sweet movement of glory, which the gentle Far-Near gives, is nothing other than a vision that God desires the Soul to have of its own glory, which it will have in eternity. And therefore, of his goodness, he gives this vision of the seventh state in the

116 *Ceste Ame, dit Amour, est toute remise, fondue et tiree, joincte et unie a haulte Trinité; et ne peut vouloir sinon selon la divine voulenté par la divine œuvre de toute la Trinité . Et une ravissable clarté et lumiere la joinct et la presse de plus pres.* Porete, *Mirouer* (1986), pp. 190–192 (1. 4–8).

117 *Mais ceste Ame, ainsi pure et clariffiee, ne voit ne Dieu ne elle, mais Dieu se voit de luy en elle, pour elle, sans elle* [...] *Et pource ne cognoist ceste Ame sinon luy, et si n'ayme sinon luy, ne ne loue sinon luy, car il n'est fors que luy* [...] *Et pource se voit Bonté de sa bonte par divine lumiere, ou siziesme estat, duquel l'Ame est clariffiee. Et si n'est, for cil qui est, qui se voit en tel estre de sa divine majesté, par muance d'amour de bonté espandue et remise en luy. Et pource voit de luy en telle creature, sans approprier rien a creature; tout est de son propre, mais son propre mesme.* Porete, *Mirouer* (1986), pp. 330–332 (1. 186–200).

sixth. This vision is born of the seventh state, which gives the sixth state of being.[118]

Pseudo-Hadewijch

Poems 17 to 29 from the so-called *Mixed Poems* (*Mengeldichten*) by Hadewijch are of great importance for Ruusbroec's mysticism,[119] whose mystical character Axters underscores.[120] Research has demonstrated that Hadewijch did not write them. The poems appear to be divided into two separate series, namely, 17–24 and 25–29, with differing themes and literary forms.[121] They are partly linked to the transmission of Hadewijch's works, considering their inclusion in the Hadewijch manuscripts B (Brussels, K.B. 2877–78) and C (Ghent, U.B. 941)— the former originating at the Charterhouse of Herne[122]—as well as in the much younger manuscript Antwerp, Ruusbroec Institute, Neerl. 385 II. They are omitted, however, from MS A (Brussels, K.B. 2879–80), though they do appear in the 14th-century manuscript Brussels, K.B. 3093–95, also from Herne, which contains no work by Hadewijch.[123] A modern French translation of

118 *Le siziesme est glorieux, car l'ouverture du doulx mouvement de gloire, que le gentil Loingprés donne, n'est aultre chose que une apparicion, que Dieu veult que l'Ame ait de sa gloire mesme, que elle aura sans fin. Et pource luy fait de sa bonté ceste demonstrance du setiesme estat ou siziesme. Laquelle demonstrance naist du septiesme estat qui donne le siziesme ester*. Porete, *Mirouer* (1986), pp. 176–178 (1. 10–16).

119 The texts are published in Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 86–142. We do not take the *Tweevormich tractaetken* into account here, though it is also included in a number of Hadewijch manuscripts. Jozef Van Mierlo published the text in his edition of the *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 191–204. Kurt Ruh opines: 'The *Tractaetken* has nothing to do with mysticism, and it is part of the historiography of mysticism only because it is traditionally associated with Hadewijch' (Mit Mystik hat das "Tractaetken" nichts zu tun, und der Geschichtschreibung der Mystik gehört es nur, weil es in der Hadewijch-Nachfolge steht). Ruh (1999), p. 231. Vekeman (1996) judged this enigmatic text (that was probably written in the late 13th century) more positively.

120 'Nobody will deny that the vision evinced by each of these poems remains of a level seldom found in humanity's religious poetry' (Niemand zal ontkennen dat de visie, welke deze gedichten te kennen geven, op een niveau blijft dat wij in de religieuse poëzie der mensheid zelden ontmoeten) Axters (1953), p. 200.

121 As indicated by Jozef Van Mierlo. For the division into two groups, see Axters (1953), p. 195f. Murk-Jansen (1991) has defended, though unconvincingly, Hadewijch's authorship; cf. De Baere (1993b), pp. 40–51.

122 Cf. Kwakkel (2002), p. 219; the manuscript was produced between 1350 and 1400.

123 Produced between 1375 and 1400. See Kwakkel (2002), p. 240.

these poems has been published by Jean-Baptiste Porion,[124] and an English translation by John Arblaster.[125]

Jozef Van Mierlo categorized these poems in the 'school of Hadewijch' and dated them late 13th or 14th century, based on the period's prevalent verse form—aabccb (p. xxix)—used in the first series. He remarked that these poems are thematically linked to Eckhart, but that Eckhart is more likely to have been influenced by these poems than vice versa. Axters partially endorsed this judgment,[126] based on the manuscript dating. He also suggested, however, that both Eckhart and Pseudo-Hadewijch were indebted to an older tradition, considering that passages written by Albert the Great in approximately 1260 are echoed in both sets of texts. Kurt Ruh was very critical to the suggestion that Eckhart might have been influenced by Pseudo-Hadewijch, as Van Mierlo had suggested ('The authority of Van Mierlo is an almost incomprehensible phenomenon.').[127]

Another hypothesis, though little researched, focuses on the connection between these poems and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror*. Paul Verdeyen first formulated this hypothesis ('*Mengeldichten* 17 to 24 belong to the same *minne* school as the *Mirror* by Marguerite Porete'),[128] referring in this regard to striking terminological similarities such as the expression *sonder enich waeromme* / *sans nul pourquoi*, which occur both in Middle Dutch mysticism and in Marguerite.[129] Of greater note, however, is the expression *verre bi*, which displays remarkable similarity with Marguerite's *Loingprés*:

Die in dat hoghe kinnen	In that high knowledge
Der bloter minnen	Of pure love
Waerdeloes	Wordlessly
Diepere crighen	Striving deeper,
Venden haere ontbliven	We may evermore find
Meere altoes.	What we lack.
Nuwe mare	In dark clarity
In doncker clare	We find
Vinden si,	Modeless
Van hoghen prise	New tidings
Sonder wise	Of great value
In verre bi.	In the far-near.

124 Porion (1954b).
125 See Appendix One in this volume.
126 Axters (1953), p. 204.
127 Ruh (1993), p. 188.
128 Verdeyen (1982), p. 154.
129 Ibid.

Considering that we do not know when exactly these poems were written, it is, of course, practically impossible to ascertain the direction of this influence: from the poems to Marguerite or vice versa.

Nonetheless, it is evident that Ruusbroec was familiar with the poems. Indeed, his works contain literal references to them, such as in *Rungs*,[130] in *Realm*,[131] in *Mirror*,[132] and most strikingly in *Beguines*, whose opening verses contain an almost literal quote from *Mengeldicht* 25.[133]

Research into the mystical theology of these refined, complex poems has yet to be conducted. We may, however, by way of a preliminary exploration, make a number of observations. The two series (17–24 and 25–29) are undoubtedly different, both with respect to form and theme. And yet they also contain clear similarities. The poems frequently refer to a contemplative, simple knowledge (*pure knowledge*, 17, 14; *verslonden in eenen eenvoldeghen staren*, 25, 18), which is simultaneously a fathomless, groundless unknowing (*onwetene sonder gront*, 25, 2) and a knowing of love (*dat hoghe kinnen der bloeter minnen*, 17, 25–26). The poet describes a union with the soul's 'beginning' (17, 91–96), which occurs in the experience of *minne* (18, 121–132), and 'transforms' (*overformet* 27, 10). The theme of *minne* is often used in images such as the 'enclosure' of *minne* (18, 32), the 'school' of *minne* (22, 43), or the 'noble light' of *minne* (27, 1, which is referred to as a 'pure spark' and 'glimmer,' 27, 3). As mentioned, it is striking that the expression 'love without a why' (*minne sonder waeromme*) occurs in these poems (18, 161–162). The poems explicitly refer to Trinitarian mystical concepts, such as in 20, 1–36, and 22, 1–12, and to life communion with Christ, such as in 18, 271–288. The poems characterize the contemplative experience and union with God on the one hand as 'being widened' by the Uncreated (21, 13–24) and on the other as 'being detached' from all accidentals and thus free of all modes (26, 13–16, where those who experience this are referred to as 'the poor in spirit') and of all 'selfhood' (*selfsheyt* 27, 40). The first verse of the last poem (29) summarizes various themes:

Willecome, oerspronc van binnen!	Welcome, origin within!
Du brenghes edel hemelsch kinnen;	You bring noble, heavenly knowledge;
Du voeds altoes met nuwer minnen;	You nourish always with new love;
Du houdes mi ledech in dijn versinnen	In your contemplation, you keep me empty
Alles toevals met uuters kinnen.	Of the accidentals of outward knowledge.

130 *Rungs* 1045 corresponds to Poem 27, 19–24; *Rungs* 915–916 contains the expression *the very life of the soul* from Poem 27, 4; *Rungs* 236f. corresponds to Poem 18, 295f.

131 *Realm* 1532–1541 refers to Poem 27.

132 *Mirror* 883f. refers to Poem 19, 10f.

133 Vallarsa (2010) provides a long list of possible allusions and corresponding themes.

John of Ruusbroec's Life and Works

John Arblaster and Rob Faesen

This contribution is intended to be a general introduction summarizing the central elements of John of Ruusbroec's life and works. For a detailed overview of secondary literature, see Loet Swart's contribution in this volume.

Life

In approximately 1360, John of Ruusbroec, who was then almost seventy, walked about forty kilometers from his monastery at Groenendaal to the Charterhouse of Herne. The community of Carthusians had invited him to clarify certain apparently perplexing aspects of his mystical theology. For the purposes of this article, Ruusbroec's visit to Herne is important because it resulted in the first extant written testimony about his life: the prologue by Brother Gerard of Saintes. This is one of only two extant 'biographical' documents about Ruusbroec written by people who knew him personally. It is consequently one of the most important sources at our disposal about the Brabantine mystic.

Gerard of Saintes' prologue is important because an examination of Ruusbroec's life immediately reveals a number of significant lacunae. The reason for this is to be sought in the specific intention of the scarce sources available to us about him. No biography in the true sense of the word was ever written about Ruusbroec. The text usually considered the most important source was written by Henrik Utenbogaerde († 1469)—better known by his Latinized name Henricus Pomerius—forty years after Ruusbroec's death.[1] The document is, in fact, a history of the foundation and early years of the Priory of Groenendaal. As part of this history, the author naturally also sketches the life of John of Ruusbroec as one of the priory's founders, and he does so with the specific intention of illustrating Ruusbroec's contribution to the priory's development. It thus is by no means a real biography. Moreover, the text contains numerous problematic assertions, as we will discuss below.[2]

1 Pomerius, *De origine* (1885). A Middle Dutch translation was made of the first two parts of this work. On a number of points, however, they deviate substantially from the original. It has been published in Verdeyen (1981e).

2 The historical value of Pomerius' text is a disputed topic in Ruusbroec studies. Indeed, the historian Paul O'Sheridan painted Pomerius as a falsifier who attempted to obscure the real reasons for the foundation of the priory at Groenendaal. O'Sheridan argued that Ruusbroec

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_004



ILLUSTRATION 1 *Portrait of John of Ruusbroec, Anonymous, ca. 1580, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Antwerp*

Gerard of Saintes' prologue is less problematic and therefore far more important, despite the fact that it is only a relatively brief testimony written to accompany a collection of Ruusbroec's texts that Brother Gerard had copied for his monastery's library.[3] The aforementioned invitation to Herne had been issued because the Carthusians were convinced of the value of Ruusbroec's work, but were aware that this conviction was not universally accepted.[4] It thus was not Brother Gerard's intention to write a biography but, rather, to introduce and situate the mystic's works correctly, to reflect the author's intentions and to respond to possible objections. A similar apology was added to a later manuscript, though it contained no biographical information.[5] Geert Grote also knew Ruusbroec personally, and a letter from him to Ruusbroec is extant.[6] The works of Jan van Leeuwen, a lay brother and the cook at Groenendaal, also provide some information about Ruusbroec, who was his confessor.[7]

Finally, we possess a number of shorter sources as well, though they contain no personal information. The notations in the compilation manuscripts inform us of the chronology of Ruusbroec's works, while the epilogue by the so-called 'Descendant' (*nacomelinc*) discusses the copying of manuscripts and Ruusbroec's theology.[8] A letter from Willem Jordaens to the Cistercian Abbey of Ter Doest concerns the Latin translation of *Espousals*.[9] Finally, the *obituarium* of Groenendaal also contains a note about Ruusbroec, in addition to

---

and his group were, in fact, disciples of the millenarian thought of Joachim of Fiore and that the foundation of Groenendaal must be considered from this perspective. See the chapter by Swart in this volume. This hypothesis was energetically and convincingly rejected by, among others, Axters and Ampe. The indirect consequence of this rather unfortunate development in Ruusbroec research is that scholars tend not to question Pomerius' historical reliability too readily.

3 'Die prologe van her Gerardus,' published in de Vreese (1895), pp. 5–20; English translation by John Arblaster, see Appendix Three in this volume.

4 See below in our discussion of *Little Book*.

5 Edited by Faesen (2000); English translation in Van Nieuwenhove, Faesen & Rolfson (2008), pp. 60–65.

6 Grote, *Epistolae* (1933), Letter 24 (pp. 107–109). Another letter from Geert Grote to Ruusbroec is dated shortly after Easter 1383, namely, Letter 54 (Grote, *Epistolae* (1933), pp. 207–209). Ruusbroec, however, had died by then.

7 These have not yet been published. Willem de Vreese published Jan of Leeuwen's eulogy of Ruusbroec, de Vreese (1895), pp. 253, 255–256. This text was used by Pomerius and may provide some insight into the manner in which he used his sources. English translation by John Arblaster, see Appendix Five in this volume.

8 Translated by John Arblaster, see Appendix Four in this volume.

9 Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 203–204.

further information that may serve as an indirect source.[10] For example, the *obituarium* mentions that Jan van Schoonhoven († 1431) wrote a biography of Ruusbroec.[11] Unfortunately, the document is lost.

What do these various sources tell us about Ruusbroec's life? He was born at Ruusbroec, as his name indicates. Here, however, we encounter the first problem, as we do not know to which Ruusbroec this refers. There are several localities near Brussels named Ruusbroec (Ruisbroek): near the village of Puurs, which seems least probable; between Brussels and Halle, which is certainly a possibility; and just outside the old city walls of Brussels, which we consider the most probable location for his birth. Pomerius uses the Latin term *villa* (called 'Ruusbroec') to indicate Ruusbroec's birthplace,[12] offering no solution to this problem, as it simply denotes a village outside the city.

Ruusbroec was born in 1293.[13] Nothing whatsoever is known about his father, leading some researchers to speculate that he was an illegitimate child, though there is no further evidence to support the claim. Considering the intention of the available sources, the absence of any reference to Ruusbroec's father may simply indicate that he was of no particular significance for his son's later spiritual development. Indeed, the young Ruusbroec left home early and was taken in by his uncle Jan Hinckaert, a chaplain of Saint Gudule's Church, near which he lived.[14] As a boy, Ruusbroec was probably educated at the collegiate church school according to the standard liberal arts curriculum. Pomerius appears to suggest that Ruusbroec only completed the *trivium* and did not proceed to the *quadrivium* or any subsequent university education: 'When he had studiously completed four years at this school in Brussels, like Saint Benedict, in all his doings he came to love divine wisdom more than human sciences that lead to honored position.'[15] A university education was indeed the preparation for a career, but need we thus necessarily assume, as some have done, that Ruusbroec's education simply ended upon his completion of the *trivium*? This appears highly unlikely, considering the standard of

10 Dykmans (1940).

11 Ampe (1975a), pp. 225–228, doubts whether such a *vita* ever existed.

12 *Sic dictus a villa unde natalem traxit originem*, Pomerius, *De origine* (1885), p. 285. In the Middle Dutch translation, *villa* is translated as *dorpe*. Verdeyen (1981e), p. 138.

13 Pomerius informs us that Ruusbroec died in 1381—the same date mentioned by the necrology of Groenendaal—at the age of 88 (ch. 31).

14 'A rich man and a devoted priest,' Warnar (2007), p. 18. In 1327, he gave an annuity of eight pounds (one-eighth of the income from his mill in Schaarbeek) to Ruusbroec, *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 52.

15 *Quas cum annis circiter quattuor Bruxellae docilis frequentasset, more beati Benedicti magis divinam sapientiam vita et moribus, quam humanam scientiam vacantem honoribus adamavit*. Pomerius, *De origine* (1885), p. 284.

his works.[16] We consider it more likely that he ended a certain type of education, namely, studies 'leading to honored position,' but that he did subsequently continue his education. Some have suggested that he may have moved to the renowned Abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris for a study period; the abbey had a long tradition of combining intellectual and spiritual life. Unfortunately, the page of the abbey's 'guest book'—which also records the students who studied at the abbey school—for the period Ruusbroec may have been at the abbey, was cut out and is lost. In any event, Ruusbroec certainly received excellent intellectual formation. For whatever reason, however, Pomerius does not mention where it occurred. Moreover, Geert Warnar rightly notes that we must not underestimate Hinckaert's importance in Ruusbroec's development.[17] The Groenendaal archives reveal that Hinckaert donated beautifully illuminated manuscripts to the priory. From this we may conclude that he attached great importance to spiritual and intellectual life.

Ruusbroec was ordained in 1317 and subsequently spent 25 years as a canon of the collegiate church of Saints Michael and Gudule. This information is confirmed by Brother Gerard and appears reliable. Pomerius describes the young priest in Brussels and implies that his demeanor contrasted strongly with the rich, bustling, conceited, and superficial clergy:

> He was composed and quiet, dressed poorly, but dignified in his bearing. He walked the streets alone, though he seldom left the house because he enjoyed the rest of contemplation more than outward activities. It once happened that he was walking in the streets of Brussels, his spirit completely consumed by heavenly thoughts. When some people saw him walk past, they stopped, noticing his simple appearance and poor attire, one said to the others: 'If only I were as holy as that priest walking by!' One of the others replied: 'I would not wish to take his place for all the gold in the world, for I would never know pleasure.' Ruusbroec happened to hear these words, and he quietly answered to himself: 'How little you suspect of the sweetness felt by those who have tasted the Spirit of God.'[18]

16 This representation of Ruusbroec as barely literate resulted in a controversy, which was analyzed extensively by Ampe (1975a).

17 Warnar (2007), p. 18.

18 *Erat enim quietus et tacitus, habitu despectus, sed cultus moribus; et tanquam solitarius per vicos incessit. Quos tanto rarius frequentavit, quanto carius contemplationis quietem quam occupationes forinsecas adamavit. Unde contigit quodam tempore ut mente suspensus in coelestibus Bruxellae incederet per plateas. In cujus transitu dum quidam assisterent seculares, simplicitatis suae modum et habitum attendentes, unus sic ait inter ceteros: 'o utinam ego essem tam senctus sicut presbyter ille ibi transiens!' Cui cum socius sibi assistens responderet: 'Ego pro toto auro mundi nonvellem esse in statu suo, quia tunc nunquam*

This passage is somewhat anecdotal, as are many of Pomerius' descriptions. The central point is that Ruusbroec was a contemplative priest living in the midst of a worldly city. His comportment was apparently rather unusual, and was misunderstood. Although we do not know the precise chronology of Ruusbroec's works,[19] he certainly began writing in Brussels, as Brother Gerard affirms.

This brings us to our second point, which Pomerius underscores and which has unfortunately left a lasting impression on the perception of Ruusbroec. Even Brother Gerard's short prologue does not fail to note: 'For in those days, there was a great need for comprehensive holy Christian doctrine in the Dutch language, due to a number of heresies and false teachings that had emerged.'[20] In other words, Ruusbroec has occasionally been depicted as a heresy hunter. Pomerius reinforces this rather unfortunate conception:

> While Ruusbroec still lived as a priest in the world [i.e., as a secular priest], a heretical woman lived in the city of Brussels, who was popularly known as 'Bloemaerdinne.' She was held in such high esteem that people claimed two seraphim accompanied her to the altar when she went to take the Eucharist. She wrote extensively on the 'Free Spirit' and about perverse, sensual love, which she called 'seraphic.' As the instigator of new doctrine, she was revered by her numerous followers [. . .] The orthodox man was greatly perturbed by this error and battled this heretical doctrine from the outset. Despite much resistance but protected by the shield of the truth he unmasked the deviations and heresies she had circulated for many years in her so-called 'inspired' writings, which are completely contrary to our faith.[21]

---

essem laetus.' Ipse casu haec verba audiens, sic intra se tacitus respondit: 'O quam parum nosti quid dulcedinis illi sentiunt qui dei spiritum gustaverunt! Pomerius, *De origine* (1885), pp. 285–286.

19 See the chapter by Swart in this volume.

20 *Want doen ter tijt was heyligher ganser leringhe in dietscher tonghen groet noot, om enighe ypocrisien ende contrarien die doe op gheresen waren.* De Vreese (1895), p. 11.

21 *Erat in oppido Bruxellensi eo tempore Dei famulus presbyter mansit in seculo, mulier quaedam perversi dogmatis, dicta vulgariter 'Bloemaerdinne,' tantae famae et opinionis ut etiam tempore sacrae communionis, quando videlicet ad arcam accederet, inter duos gradi seraphim crederetur. Haec multa scribens de spiritu libertatis et nefandissimo amore venereo, quem et seraphicum appellabat, tamquam inventrix novae doctrinae a multis suae opinionis discipulis venerabatur* [. . .] *Huic igitur errori compatiens vir plenus spiritu pietatis, illico perversae se doctrinae opposuit; et quamvis multos haberet aemulos, scuto circumdatus veritatis, scripta fucata et haeretica quae tamquam divinitus inspirata illa quotannis in fidei*

Inspired by the conception of Ruusbroec as a heresy hunter, the statue of him that currently stands in the Cathedral of Saints Michael and Gudule in Brussels depicts him gazing toward heaven with his pen in his hand and his right foot trampling the head of an allegory of heresy. Moreover, Pomerius' identification of heresy with a concrete female figure—Bloemaerdinne—has paved the way for discussion of gender issues: the male priest Ruusbroec trampling the female mystic Bloemaerdinne.

For two reasons, this conception must be fundamentally revised. First, Pomerius' reference to Bloemaerdinne is a bizarre mistake. A certain Heilwigis Bloemaerts, who was known as Bloemaerdinne, in fact did live in Brussels in Ruusbroec's time; she even lived in the same street as Jan Hinckaert and Ruusbroec. She was not, however, a heretic. On the contrary, she was a socially committed woman who had founded a home for the city's elderly poor, which was transferred to the management of the chapter of Brussels after her death. The chapter annually celebrated Mass in her memory at least until the reign of Charles V.[22] Furthermore, there is no evidence whatsoever that she wrote any treatises, let alone one about the movement of the Free Spirit. Pomerius' motives for presenting such an obvious mistake are unknown, though as we discuss below, his biography may have been part of a wider propaganda campaign at Groenendaal to clear their former prior of any suspicion after Jean Gerson's condemnation. On this reading, Pomerius simply used Bloemaerdinne as a tool to demonstrate Ruusbroec's orthodoxy.

Recent research has, however, attempted to identify the 'heretical woman' Ruusbroec supposedly opposed. One hypothesis suggests that she may have been the mystic Hadewijch (who is generally assumed to have been a beguine, though no historical evidence whatsoever substantiates the assumption). This hypothesis is unconvincing for several reasons. First, it is more than likely that

---

nostrae derogationem disseruit, ipse veraciter denudavit. Pomerius, *De origine* (1885), p. 286.

22 Warnar (2007), p. 69, however, is more inclined to follow Pomerius' version of events and depiction of Heilwich Bloemaerts ('Bloemaerdinne'): 'While it is true that Heilwich Bloemaerts emerges from the archives as a paragon of righteousness, business transactions do not reveal much about religious ideas and practices. For a proper understanding of the latter, we must explore the far-reaching consequences of her decision to take charge of a community of beguines.' According to Warnar, this fact as such suffices to question her orthodoxy. It is not entirely clear why this is necessarily the case, however. Many beguinages were patronized by the nobility and royalty, even after the Council of Vienne. In 1319, in fact, Pope John XXII sent a letter of protection to one of the beguinages in Brussels, den Wijngaerd (the Vineyard), so there is no reason to assume that the convent of Meerbeek/Blomart was suspect. Furthermore, authorities in the Southern Low Countries were slow to react to the decrees of Vienne. See Simons (2001), pp. 132–137.

Hadewijch was a contemporary not of Ruusbroec but, rather, of Beatrice of Nazareth.[23] Second, the content of Ruusbroec's theology does not oppose Hadewijch's work in any respect. On the contrary, she is one of his most quoted sources, though he never names her explicitly, and his thought is completely consonant with her own. Another hypothesis suggests that the 'heretical woman' may have been the French-speaking beguine Marguerite Porete, who was condemned by the Inquisition and executed in 1310. Verdeyen suggests that Ruusbroec condemned *The Mirror of Simple Souls* at the end of the second book of *Espousals*, though he also appears to have appreciated and adopted a number of themes from the work.[24] The tenability of this position is challenged by the numerous textual and theological allusions to Marguerite's *Mirror t*hroughout Ruusbroec's works.[25]

The second and more fundamental reason the image of Ruusbroec as a heresy hunter must be revised is that he does not present himself as such; on the contrary. Despite a number of references to and rejections of heterodox teaching, which we also find in other mystics' works, Ruusbroec is primarily a contemplative author whose thought is intimately connected to that of Hadewijch, Eckhart, or Marguerite Porete.[26] The fact that he occasionally refers to statements that may appear heretical if taken out of their context—we know this befell both Eckhart and Porete—is intended not as a repudiation of these authors but, rather, as an attempt to critically reformulate their positions in order to demonstrate their orthodoxy. This undoubtedly contributed to the condemnation of Ruusbroec's works themselves, since they were deemed heterodox for the same reasons Eckhart and Porete had been. Ruusbroec's thought was not universally accepted during his lifetime and was explicitly rejected after his death; the emphasis on Ruusbroec as a heresy hunter may simply have been an attempt to exempt him from suspicion.[27]

This may, incidentally, clarify Pomerius' bizarre mistake concerning Bloemaerdinne. Jean Gerson (1363–1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris, first voiced theological objections to Ruusbroec's *Espousals* in approximately 1398. He repeated these objections several times, despite Jan van Schoonhoven's attempts to assuage his ire on the subject. On the Feast of Pentecost in 1416,

23 This dating follows the most recent Hadewijch research. See the introduction by Veerle Fraeters and Frank Willaert in Hadewijch, *Liederen* (2009).

24 Verdeyen (1992).

25 *The Sparkling Stone* bears particularly close resemblance to the *Mirror* in many respects, both textual and theological. See, e.g., *Stone* 600–617 and Porete, *Mirouer* (1986), pp. 234–236 (1. 40–46). Ruusbroec's use of the *Mirror* is particularly striking because it is unlikely that he was unaware of its author's fate.

26 Faesen (2007).

27 See Arblaster & Faesen (2013a).

Gerson preached a homily at the Ecumenical Council of Constance; he did not mention Ruusbroec by name but reiterated the condemnation of his thought. The community at Groenendaal attempted to correct Gerson's misunderstanding on numerous occasions, and Pomerius' biography, written shortly after the council, may be considered an element in this concerted, though largely unsuccessful, defense of Ruusbroec's orthodoxy. Gerson's theological objections reverberated for centuries, though they reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of Ruusbroec's work.[28] On this reading, Pomerius mentions Bloemaerdinne simply to give historical credence to his depiction of Ruusbroec as an orthodox combater of heresies.

In any case, while Ruusbroec lived and worked as a chaplain in Brussels, he apparently practiced a specific form of intellectual life. Though he was a simple chaplain associated with the Church of Saint Gudule, he was also a brilliant religious thinker and author who made a unique contribution to the intellectual life of his age. He wrote his first treatises during the Brussels period; we shall discuss these works more extensively below.

John of Ruusbroec did not remain in Brussels, but our sources provide no clear information about his reasons for leaving. Brother Gerard simply states that Ruusbroec 'wanted to remove himself from public life.'[29] Here again, Pomerius' description is usually assumed to be accurate. According to Pomerius' narrative, Jan Hinckaert, Ruusbroec's rich uncle, changed his lifestyle and began living more simply and inwardly. A young canon, Frank van Coudenberg, moved in with them at some point. Van Coudenberg renounced his prebend in 1339 in favor of a simpler lifestyle. The three priests lived together, sharing a harmonious inner spiritual life. Gradually, they formed a plan to leave the safety of the city and seek a life of greater solitude, deprivation, and vulnerability. John III, duke of Brabant, provided the means for this move by offering them a hermitage in the Sonian Forest; Brother Gerard also mentions this gift.[30] The dukes of Brabant had transferred the duchy's capital from Leuven to Brussels some time before and had settled on the Coudenberg—the ducal palace stood not far from the present Royal Palace. Frank van Coudenberg was closely connected to the ducal court, and it is presumably

28 See the chapter by Kees Schepers in this volume.

29 *Daer na woude hi hem doen uter menichte vanden luden*. De Vreese (1895), p. 8.

30 *Ende overmids den toedoen van enen anderen oec devoten en rikeren capelaen die hier Vranc van Coudenberghe, stichten si tot harer beider behoef ene matelijcke habitacie, suit oest van Bruesele op een mile int wout van Sonien, in een dal dat hier gronen dal, dair voirtijts een cluse stont om een clusenaer* (Thanks to the intervention of another devout, but wealthier chaplain by the name of Frank van Coudenberg, they were able to acquire a modest residence located to the south-east of Brussels, about one mile into the Sonian Forest, in a valley called Groenendaal, where a hermitage had once stood). Ibid.

thanks to his influence that the hermitage was obtained. The three priests moved during Easter week 1343.

Pomerius provides a rather strange account of their reasons for leaving the city:

> Ardent in the practice of love towards one another, deeply religious and as examples to their neighbors, they endeavored every day and with great joy, each according to their rank, to pray the canonical liturgy of the hours with great care in the aforementioned Church of Saint Gudule and thus to serve the Lord with psalms and hymns. But when, in addition to the restless activity of a number of chaplains in the church and the noise and hubbub of the people, a chaplain named Godfried Kerreken also disturbed them very often during their prayers—the man undoubtedly had a voice like a trumpet, but untrained and false—their consciences repeatedly compelled them to reread what they had already read or to beginning the hours again privately. Ultimately, it began to irk them so much that together, they started looking for a satisfactory solution. (Pomerius, p. 65)[31]

At a cursory glance, the biographer appears to depict Ruusbroec and his companions as excessively scrupulous. Are we genuinely to believe that these men were unsatisfied with the liturgy and planned to move to the forest definitively solely because one of the canons sang badly? A possible explanation of the symbolic meaning of his text may be found in Ruusbroec's own work. In *The Seven Rungs*, he presents the spiritual meaning of the liturgy, describing it as a hymn the spiritual person sings in harmony with Christ, the cantor.[32] This may indicate that Hinckaert, van Coudenberg, and Ruusbroec left Brussels due to a conflict with (certain members of) the Brussels clergy. In other words, their impression may have been that the attitude of a number of their colleagues, such as Canon Godfried Kerreken, was discordant with the hymn led by Christ.

---

31 *Qui cum essent invicem caritate fervidi, Deo devoti et proximis exemplares, quotidie singuli devotissime, secundum differentias suorum graduum, in dicta ecclesia Sanctae Gudilae, psalmis et hymnis Domino servientes, omni vigilantia horas canonicas solvere divinisque alacriter interesse satagebant. Verum, cum praeter alias in eadem ecclesia fieri solitas capellarorum inquietudines ac secularium strepitus et rumores, capellanus quidam, nomine Godefridus Kerreken, eos saepissime in suis exercitiis perturbaret* (*habuit nimirium idem ipse vocem tubalem, rudem et dissonam*)*, ipsi frequenter lecta relegere aut seorsum horas suas in privato dicere, cogente conscientia, sunt compulsi. Unde tandem victi taedio, coeperunt pro salutari remedio invicem cogitare*. Pomerius, *De origine* (1885), p. 275.

32 *Rungs* 820, 871, 966.

Pomerius implies that Ruusbroec and his companions had difficulty living in union with Christ due to these external influences and thus decided to move away. Furthermore, Ruusbroec's works contain numerous, occasionally strongly worded, references to the clergy's worldly, superficial, and conceited attitudes.[33] And yet, Ruusbroec's own thought does not appear to support these reasons for leaving Brussels. On a number of occasions in his work, he states that a contemplative is not hindered by external circumstances, however difficult they may be.[34]

Pomerius' description of the move to Groenendaal may require further historical correction. He presents the move as Ruusbroec and his companions' own initiative, a choice they took completely freely and autonomously as a result of dissatisfaction with their living and working conditions in Brussels. However, this may be a one-sided presentation of a more complex matter. It is certainly possible that the dissatisfaction was mutual. Ruusbroec's colleagues who knew his works must have recognized his numerous references to Porete and Eckhart, who were condemned not long before, in 1310 and 1329 respectively. Though Pomerius situates the following passage after the departure from Brussels, the derision he describes may not have been limited to that period:

> After Reverend Frank was appointed father and director of the others, the enemy began to sow weeds on the Lord's fields. Some said that they were good people, but others denied it. And thus a violent storm rose up against the new foundation. When they had lived there together for five years as secular priests, not only laypeople, but also conventuals and clergymen cried out against them and they were mocked.[35]

This brief passage containing no further explanation appears rather incongruous and raises the question why such rumors should have spread only after the move to Groenendaal. The Brussels clergy may already have considered Ruusbroec problematic before the move, and this may have contributed to the

33 E.g., *Tabernacle* 5:5945–6184.

34 See, e.g., the concrete advice he gives in a number of his letters: *Letter* I *19–*23 and *Letter* VII 15–18, or *Rungs* 758–771.

35 *Praefecto interea Domino Francone ceteris in patrem et curatum, coepit zizania in agrum Dominicum hostis nequissimus seminare. Et dicentibus aliis quoniam boni sunt, aliis e contra quoniam non sunt, crevit novellae huic plantationi tempestas valida et vehemens valde. Cum enim annis quinque vel circiter, licet presbyteri, sub habitu tamen seculari ibidem insimul habitassent, facti sunt non solum laicis, verum etiam religiosis et clericis in scandalum paritet et derisum*. Pomerius, *De origine* (1885), p. 277.

priests' decision to leave the city. Within the historical context, the choice to move to Groenendaal may indicate that Ruusbroec's contemplative life and teaching were considered unacceptable, just as Eckhart's and Marguerite Porete's had been. Though Ruusbroec was never tried for his mysticism, he was clearly outside the city's mainstream ecclesiastical life.

Moreover, we must not underestimate the decision to leave the city and move to a hermitage in the Sonian Forest. The environment of a 14th-century city would certainly have afforded more security and comfort than a vulnerable life in an abandoned hermitage in the woods. In other words, these three well-born priests left the protective walls of the city to live in a far more dangerous environment, just as the Desert Fathers had done in the first centuries of Christianity. They sought their safety in a life lived in, with, and through Christ. In fact, in one of his works (*Rungs* 175–180), Ruusbroec refers to the Desert Fathers' life of hardship and deprivation as an ideal.

We must guard against the idea—suggested by Pomerius—that the move to Groenendaal prefigured a monastic foundation, as this was not the priests' initial intention. The duke had granted them permission to live at the hermitage on the condition that they built a chapel and a house for five religious men. The bishop appointed Frank van Coudenberg as the priest responsible for the chapel. For seven years, they lived thus, without a legal ecclesiastical status. If they had wished to enter monastic life, they could have joined one of the many religious communities in the area, such as one of the charterhouses. Indeed, a number of Ruusbroec's works contain critiques of existing religious orders, which he considered to have abandoned their original religious inspiration. According to Ruusbroec, however, the Carthusians were an exception to this rule.[36]

It is important to note that Ruusbroec's move to Groenendaal was not entirely unrelated to his intellectual pursuits. On the contrary, in keeping with an old tradition—one might refer, for example, to what William of Saint-Thierry writes in his *Epistola aurea*—he considered the hermit's life an exemplary framework for a contemplative form of intellectual life. Furthermore, Ruusbroec's departure from Brussels by no means inhibited his intellectual and literary activities, which increased considerably after the move.[37]

---

36 See *Tabernacle* 5:6176–6179.

37 As the Middle Dutch version of Pomerius' narrative states: 'In order that the clear light of his great understanding would be revealed to those most receptive to it by means of their virtuous life' (*Op dat alsoe dat claer licht van sijnre hoger verstandenis meer soude worden den genen gheopenbaert die es meest souden heblyc syn tontfaen mitds horen duechdeliken leven*), Verdeyen (1981e), p. 140.

Eventually, the small community of priests did develop into a monastery. In 1350, they adopted the Rule of St Augustine and received the habit of the Canons Regular of St Augustine from the bishop. Frank van Coudenberg was appointed provost, while Ruusbroec became prior. The community thus obtained the specific canonical status of an Augustinian priory. Brother Gerard tells us that Ruusbroec did not favor this development, but the number of postulants attracted to life in the forest had convinced Frank van Coudenberg that canonical recognition had become desirable. His concern is understandable, since the entire project had depended on him until that time, and it was unclear what might happen in the event of his death. Along with canonical recognition, however, the community also obtained a clear financial regulation, and it could officially admit new members. Ruusbroec himself was no great advocate of expansion, according to Brother Gerard (to whom Ruusbroec presumably communicated this personally): 'he did not attempt to prevent them because he was convinced that Reverend Frank desired to increase many people's love of God.'[38] Despite his reservations, it appears that Ruusbroec always supported the spiritual development of the expanding group through his intellectual and literary work. A number of his later works may even have been written for his own monastic community, such as his *Seven Rungs*, his *Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*, and his *Spiritual Tabernacle*. In any case, the community was well aware of the great value of Ruusbroec's works, since they compiled a manuscript containing all his works before his death, in order to preserve an apparently 'authorized' text for later generations.[39]

Pomerius relates a number of anecdotes from the years that Ruusbroec was prior of Groenendaal, such as the visit of the learned deacon Geert Grote, who was a great admirer of Ruusbroec, and the visit of two students from the University of Paris who came, according to Pomerius, 'out of curiosity, to request edifying words'[40] and were initially taken aback by Ruusbroec's response. We shall not dwell here on the content of Pomerius' narrative, but suffice it to say that Ruusbroec's fame had apparently spread to academic circles in Paris. The fact that his words were not well received there was perhaps an omen of Gerson's later censure, as Kees Schepers' article in this volume discusses in detail.

Pomerius is silent about an important event in this period, but Brother Gerard provides a relatively detailed account. The Carthusians at Herne, the

38 *Nochtan om dat hi ghevoelde dat her Vranc begherde die minne Gods te vermeeren in vele personen, soe liet hi die vergaderinghe daer werden*. De Vreese (1895), p. 9.

39 See the chapter by Guido de Baere in this volume.

40 *Curiose ab eo verbum aedificationis postulantibus*. Pomerius, *De Origine* (1885), p. 30.

monastery of which Gerard was a member, had obtained a copy of Ruusbroec's first work, *The Realm of Lovers*,[41] and were struck by a number of its passages. They invited Ruusbroec to travel to Herne and explain the text's exact meaning. As mentioned above, Ruusbroec was well disposed toward the Carthusians—one of the few orders he considered to have maintained their original contemplative ideal. Moreover, the perplexing point in *Realm* was an essential component of Ruusbroec's mystical thought. Ruusbroec's visit to Herne and his conversations with the monks resulted in a book entitled *The Little Book of Enlightenment*, in which Ruusbroec clearly and concisely discusses the central elements of his thought. We shall discuss the relevant issue more extensively below, but it is important to note that the Carthusians were perplexed by statements very similar to those that theologians had objected to in the work of Porete and Eckhart.[42] Gerson's condemnation of Ruusbroec resulted from the same point he made in *Espousals*. From the very beginning of his literary activities in Brussels until long after his death, Ruusbroec was a controversial author. This was not the case in Groenendaal, however, where he was always highly esteemed, and where he died in 1381.

Works

The Realm of Lovers (*Dat rijcke der ghelieven*)

Ruusbroec's first work bears a programmatic title: *The Realm of Lovers*. The lovers in question are God and the human person. Ruusbroec's entire oeuvre might be considered an extensive exploration of this one theme: the loving encounter between God and the human person. This is the theme discussed in his first work, which contains all the important elements his later works would develop.

The work was written during the Brussels period, but the exact date of its composition is unknown. Joseph Alaerts, who edited the text for the *Opera omnia*, dates it to approximately 1338. *Realm* is a concisely written *summa* of contemplative theology. We know, however, that Ruusbroec never intended

41 Brother Gerard tells us that Ruusbroec was very surprised that the community in Herne possessed a copy of his first book. It had been sent to them by a priest 'who had been Reverend John's notary.' The identity of this priest (a personal secretary? a civil notary?) and his role in this affair are very unclear. This 'surprise' may be something of an understatement when considered from the perspective of their (in)voluntary departure from Brussels.

42 See Faesen (2013b & forthcoming).

the work to be published. As mentioned above, about 30 years later he discovered that the Carthusians at Herne owned a copy, and he told the monks that he had explicitly forbidden his secretary from lending or circulating it. Ruusbroec's intended readership is a mystery, though presumably *Realm* was written for the small group of priests in Brussels who were 'kindred spirits.'

The work is an exposition and commentary on one sentence, a quote from the breviary in honor of a confessor-bishop. In liturgical Latin it reads *Iustum deduxit dominus per vias rectas et ostendit illi regnum Dei* (cf. Wis. 10:10), which Ruusbroec modifies slightly to 'The Lord led the just back along the right ways and showed him the realm of God' (*Die heere heeft weder leidet den gherechten die gherechte weeghe, ende hevet hem ghetoent dat rike gods*). He distinguishes five sections in the sentence. The first is 'the Lord.' Ruusbroec explains that God is Lord of the entire created world. He then discusses 'led back' (*heeft weder leidet*)—how God is also the savior of all people. In the third part, Ruusbroec treats 'the just,' namely, the life of the people saved by God, in which he discusses both the active and contemplative aspects. The fourth part—'along the right ways'—is the longest section of the work. Ruusbroec distinguishes three ways that lead to God: the way of visible creation, the way of natural reason, and the transcendent, divine way. The third way is extensively discussed based on the literary structure of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The literary structure is by no means an end in itself, however; it is an aid for the 14th-century reader to understand the active, the yearning, and the contemplative dimensions. In his next work, Ruusbroec abandoned this literary structure, describing these three dimensions as such. In the fifth part of the book, Ruusbroec discusses 'showed him the realm of God': how God reveals his realm to the *common* person. The expression '*common life*' has two antecedents in the vernacular mystical literature of the Low Countries, namely, in Beatrice of Nazareth and Marguerite Porete, and is used to express the most mature form of contemplative life.[43] Joseph Alaerts defines it as follows: 'the availability of a person who is totally lost in God and therefore remains open to the miracle of creation and of a personal life according to the Holy Spirit, both "in action" and "in yearning." It has to do with a "superessential life" that integrates all dimensions of a life that is thoroughly human.'[44] *Common* thus refers to full life communion between God and the human person.[45]

Although detailed research into Ruusbroec's sources has yet to be conducted, we might mention here that Ruusbroec clearly adopts elements from

43 See Arblaster & Faesen (2012).

44 *Opera omnia*, 4, p. 31.

45 See the chapter by Rik Van Nieuwenhove in this volume.

the eleventh of the so-called *Limburg Sermons* (anonymous, 13th-century),[46] as well as fundamental insights from the Cistercian William of Saint-Thierry (1075–1148), the Franciscan Bonaventure (1221–1274), the Dominican Hugo Ripelin of Strasbourg († 1268), the Cistercian Beatrice of Nazareth (1200–1268), and Marguerite Porete († 1310).

The Spiritual Espousals (*Die gheestelike brulocht*)

There is little doubt that *The Spiritual Espousals* is Ruusbroec's second work. In the past, it was generally assumed, based on the chronology of Ruusbroec's work provided by Pomerius, that the book was written during the Brussels period. Recent research, however, tends to favor a somewhat later dating.[47] A distinction is made between the period in which a work was written and its publication—*Realm* is thus the first work Ruusbroec wrote, but certainly not the first work he published; as mentioned, he never intended to publish it. In any case, Ruusbroec likely began writing *Espousals* during the Brussels period. He deemed the work suitable for publication, which soon occurred. The Strasbourg-based merchant and banker Rulman Merswin († 1382), who dedicated his life to God in 1347, wrote mystical texts and founded the movement of the 'Friends of God,' wrote about 'the book of the espousals, which a good, holy woodland priest from Brabant wrote, John of Ruusbroec, and sent it to us, Friends of God, here in the *Oberland*, in the jubilee year of 1350.'[48] Shortly afterwards, the work was translated into Latin by Willem Jordaens, a member of the Priory of Groenendaal, and was soon circulated widely.[49]

The Spiritual Espousals is currently considered Ruusbroec's masterpiece due to the balance and clarity of its exposition. It is also his most translated work. Without exaggeration, one may state that this work is one of the 'classics' of Christian contemplative literature thanks to the comprehensive overview Ruusbroec provides of the various forms of mystical experience (which are clearly distinguished from epiphenomena), the connection he draws between inner experience and biblical (especially Pauline and Johannine) theology, his emphasis on the *common* life lived in full life communion with Christ, and his masterly analysis of the symptoms that enable genuine contemplative life to be distinguished from 'imitations.'

---

46 See our other chapter in this volume.

47 Kienhorst & Kors (2001).

48 *Das ein lieber heiliger waltprister in Brobant schreib, heisset brůder Johans von Rúsebrůch und sante es her us in oberlant des gottes frúnden des jubel iores do men zalete von gottes gebúrte dritzehundert und fúnftzig ior*, Eichler (1969), p. 30.

49 See the chapter by Kees Schepers in this volume.

Espousals is also written as an exposition and commentary of one sentence, which forms its basic structure. The sentence is taken from Matthew's Gospel: 'See, the bridegroom cometh, go out to meet him' (*Siet, de brudegom comt; gaet ute hem te ontmoete*, Mt. 25:6). Ruusbroec distinguishes four elements that he considers essential for a Christian life. The first, 'see' (*siet*), refers to spiritual perception. The radically contemplative character of Ruusbroec's theology comes to the fore in this part of the work. In a second movement, however, 'seeing' is fundamentally associated with that which is to be seen, namely, the coming of Christ, the bridegroom (*de brudegom comt*). The third element is equally important: 'go out' (*gaet ute*). According to Ruusbroec, Christian life is to 'go out of oneself' in response to God's invitation. The fourth element, 'to meet him' (*hem te ontmoete*), is the mainstay of Ruusbroec's contemplative theology. Almost everything Ruusbroec wrote is oriented to this experience, namely, the living, loving encounter of God as God and the human person as human person: the constant, radical, and mutual gift of love.

Ruusbroec describes these four elements of Christian life on three levels, which form the second structural foundation of the work. These elements are related to Ruusbroec's anthropology, consistent with an ancient tradition originating with the Church Fathers, especially Augustine. In line with this tradition, Ruusbroec distinguishes three levels in the human person. He first describes the dimension of the five senses, second that of the higher faculties (intellect, will, and memory), and third the deepest dimension, namely, the fact that the human person exists as a creature and is therefore constantly in relation with God, the Creator. What is more, the human person simply could not exist without this constant, direct contact with the Creator. Ruusbroec refers to the third dimension as *wesen*, which might best be translated as the 'being' or the 'existence' of the human person. The *wesen* is passive, since humanity receives its existence from the Creator, but it is also active, since it is the source of all human activities. Considering that God is the creative source of this *wesen*, He is 'deeper' than the *wesen* or, in Ruusbroec's terms, 'higher.' Ruusbroec therefore refers to God as the *overwesen*: that which is 'higher' than the human *wesen*.

In the *Espousals*, Ruusbroec analyzes the four elements of the sentence *Siet, de brudegom comt; gaet ute hem te ontmoete* on three levels, corresponding to the distinctions in the soul. The first concerns that of human activity (the senses and the higher faculties). Ruusbroec calls this 'the active life.' The second concerns the inward human attraction to God, who is actively present in the *wesen*; the human person's faculties are attracted by this hidden yet tangible presence. He calls this the 'inner life' or the 'yearning life.' The third level is the 'contemplative life,' in which the contemplative person becomes fully

aware of its life in God—or, in other words, an experience of the transcendent depths of its *wesen*: namely, the life of the triune God that is the creative source of its being.

Though *Espousals* is now often referred to as Ruusbroec's greatest work, it caused considerable controversy after his death, as briefly described above. Ruusbroec's reflections on the 'contemplative life' were condemned by Gerson, whose judgment resounded for many centuries. Ruusbroec was deemed guilty of pantheism, casting a shadow of suspicion over all his work.[50]

The Sparkling Stone (*Vanden blinckenden steen*)

The precise date of composition of Ruusbroec's third work is unknown, though it was probably written during the Brussels period. It may, however, be of a somewhat later date, when he was already living at Groenendaal but before the community had adopted Augustine's Rule. Brother Gerard recounts the concrete occasion of its writing:

> Furthermore, about the fourth book—'the signet ring' or *The Sparkling Stone*—one ought to know that Reverend John was once sitting with a hermit and discussing spiritual matters and at the end of their conversation, the brother earnestly requested him [Ruusbroec] to clarify their discussion for him in writing to his or others' benefit. Following this request, he wrote this book, which alone contains enough to bring a person to a perfect life.[51]

Stone was also translated into Latin by Willem Jordaens. The community at Groenendaal considered it one of his most important works.

The title of this short treatise—which is occasionally referred to as the best-written and most insightful synthesis of Ruusbroec's thought—refers to a passage in John's Apocalypse: 'Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit

---

50 See the chapter by Kees Schepers in this volume. A clear example is the decision taken by Everard Mercurian, General Superior of the Society of Jesus, in 1575, when he prohibited Jesuits from reading Ruusbroec except with special permission from their superiors. See Faesen (2010).

51 *Voirt vanden vierden boeke, dat is vanden vingherlinc oft van den blinkenden steen, is te weten dat her Jan op een tijt sat ende redende van gheesteliker materien met enen clusenaer, ende als si sceyden souden, soe bat hem die broeder herde seer dat hi hem die redenen die si dair gehandelt hadden, woude verclaren met enighen ghescriften, op dat hi ende anders yemant dies ghebetert mochten werden. Ende uut dier beden maecte hi dat boec dat alleen ghenoech leren in heeft om eenen mensche te wisen tot enen volmaecten leven*. De Vreese (1895), pp. 16–17.

is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it' (Apoc. 2:17). This passage evidently inspired the title of *Stone*, and Ruusbroec explains that the white stone in question (which he refers to as 'sparkling') symbolizes Christ, who is given to the human person in its loving encounter with God. The treatise plumbs the depth of this loving relationship, and analyzes how one is to conceive of the gift of Christ to the human person. Ruusbroec distinguishes four forms of love. He first discusses self-interested love, in which the human person serves God for an expected reward. Ruusbroec uses the metaphor of the 'hired servant' to clarify this form of love. Second, he describes the completely selfless love of the 'faithful servant,' who does good without any expectation of reward. Occasionally, Ruusbroec says, God grants the faithful servant the awareness of being a 'secret friend' of God, namely, through the experiential awareness that the friendship is deeper than the reciprocal gifts exchanged with God. At the same time, however, the 'friend' always remains a servant who actively serves God by doing the good, while the friendship remains secret. Finally—and this is the most extensive and significant part of the work—the 'friend' may receive the complete and fundamental contemplative awareness of being a 'hidden son' of God. Ruusbroec here describes the very core of contemplative theology. The contemplative no longer sees any particular, individual concepts 'about' God but, rather, experiences the simple truth of who God is: an abyss of love into which the human person is drawn and is hidden forever as a 'beloved son' in the Son.

Naturally, this raises the question of whether the human person ultimately fuses with Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. This is one of the central issues in the objections to Meister Eckhart's work.[52] Ruusbroec makes his own position very clear when he states that Christ is always given to the human person. Christ is an active presence within the human person, as a result of which every person is a 'beloved son' of the Father, but this presence itself is a gift.

On Christian Faith (*Vanden kersten ghelove*)

The concrete circumstances of this very short book's composition are unknown, but it was certainly written before 1350. Ruusbroec may have written it in Brussels, though it may also be of a later date, after the move to the forest. The treatise is a clear, concise catechetical exposition of the creed used in the liturgy (the Niceno-Constantinopolitan *Symbolum*, though he also occasionally refers to elements from *Quicumque*, the so-called *Athanasian Creed*), explained

52 See Kikuchi (2008).

point by point. The text is intended for an advanced readership, and Ruusbroec's exposition combines dogma and spiritual life. The work is remarkable for the exemplum Ruusbroec uses to convince his readers/hearers to avoid sin for fear of the pains of hell—the only such occurrence in his entire oeuvre.

The Spiritual Tabernacle (*Vanden gheesteliken tabernakel*)

Although most modern readers consider *The Spiritual Espousals* to be Ruusbroec's masterpiece, *The Spiritual Tabernacle*—his most learned work—was probably regarded as his undisputed *magnum opus* in his own day. Willem Jordaens translated it into Latin, indicating that the community at Groenendaal also considered it significant. Ruusbroec began the work in Brussels and wrote a substantial part of it there. It was only completed after the move to Groenendaal, however. The treatise contains a number of indications that Ruusbroec composed the work on the basis of a number of different texts he had written beforehand. It is a substantial volume, more than twice the length of *The Spiritual Espousals*, and thus easily the longest work in Ruusbroec's oeuvre. It is also his most circulated work.[53]

The editor of the critical edition, Thom Mertens, convincingly demonstrates that there are sufficient indications that the text has a complex composition history and that Ruusbroec clearly used one or several texts he had written earlier. Moreover, the text was redacted a second time, during which historical information was added and certain words were systematically replaced. Brother Gerard of Herne may have been responsible for this second redaction, which was later used by Surius as the basis for his Latin translation.

Although Ruusbroec begins the work with a quote from First Corinthians: 'Run so that ye may obtain' (*loept also dat ghi begripen moegt*, 1 Cor. 9:24, Vulg.), this is not the book's central leitmotif. Rather, it focuses on the building of the Ark and the Tabernacle as described in Exodus (chs. 24–31). This is of great importance in Ruusbroec's thought because, as mentioned above, he considers Christian life to be an active and loving 'going-out-of-oneself,' i.e., an 'exodus.' According to Ruusbroec, the history of the Israelites is characterized by the exodus from Egypt, and, furthermore, it is through the exodus that they acquired their identity as a people. In the same way, a human person acquires its spiritual identity by liberating itself from imprisonment within the self and moving outside itself towards the Other. In describing the consequences of this movement, Ruusbroec conceives of the spiritual structure of the human

53 'In so far as the preserved manuscripts of Ruusbroec's works give a reliable image, the *Tabernakel* was his most widely disseminated work. With its forty-two manuscripts, the *Tabernakel* exceeds the *Brulocht* (37) and the *Spieghel* (28).' *Opera omnia*, 5/1, pp. 67–68.

person as a sanctuary of the encounter with God. Exodus states that the building of the Ark was revealed to Moses. Ruusbroec interprets this spiritually: fundamentally, the human person is a sanctuary of God's presence and the locus of the encounter with God. The underlying thought is a verse from Ephesians: 'In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God' (Eph. 2:21–22).

One may distinguish seven central points in Ruusbroec's exposition. This first is the foundation of all the others, namely, turning away from sin and towards God. This is 'moving-out-of-oneself' or love—Ruusbroec connects the quote from First Corinthians ('Run so that ye may obtain') with the 'course of love' (*der minnen loep*). The second point begins with a description of the building of the Tabernacle, the enclosed space that must be demarcated: the external and moral life. The third point is the altar, which stands for the inner core of the human person, vivified by love. The fourth point concerns the building of the tent of the Tabernacle, which Ruusbroec conceives of as the Church as a community, vivified by Christ's living presence. The fifth point discusses the 'inside' of the tent of the Tabernacle, in which Ruusbroec provides a long exposition on the priests who make Christ's sacrificial death present every day. The sixth point discusses the human person as the Ark of the Covenant, where Ruusbroec describes the loving union between God and the soul. Finally, in the seventh point, Ruusbroec describes how the loving soul is rooted in God's own life, rests in God, and actively works in collaboration with God.

Throughout his exposition, Ruusbroec closely follows the description of the construction of the Ark and the Tabernacle as described in the Bible and provides an allegorical, spiritual interpretation of each detail. To this end, he often appeals to the natural sciences of his age, for example with respect to the specific qualities of certain building materials, the etymology of the names of precious stones, etc. These details attest to Ruusbroec's considerable and impressive erudition. And yet, this is not the author's primary intent. His central concern is to provide a (biblically inspired) description of the loving encounter between God and the human person. To some extent, unfortunately, what made the book so fascinating to medieval readers is precisely what makes it relatively inaccessible to readers today. Contemporary readers are no longer accustomed to surveying and keeping in mind extensive, complex literary structures while reading, and as a result, the themes appear too disparate and disproportionate.

Obviously, Ruusbroec was not the first author to provide an allegorical interpretation of the building of the Ark. This treatise is part of a long tradition of such works. Ruusbroec was inspired by similar works such as Venerable Bede's commentary and the *Historia Scholastica* by Peter Comestor († 1178).

The Four Temptations (*Vanden vier becoringhen*)

This treatise is among Ruusbroec's shorter works. R. Lievens has argued that it was written at the beginning of 1343, i.e., shortly before Ruusbroec's move to Groenendaal, on the basis of a sentence that appears to allude to his departure from Brussels (*Temptations* 324–328).

Ruusbroec describes four temptations that may occur in the spiritual life. The first is sensuality, which inclines religious people to a luxurious lifestyle. The second is precisely the opposite: leading a conspicuously ascetic life intended to inspire an illusion of holiness in others. The third temptation affects those with a keen intellect, who think themselves able to reach all truth and understand the Scriptures independently. Ruusbroec's rejection of these people is particularly stern: 'they are as pagan unbelievers who have no awareness of God' (*Temptations* E143–E144). With respect to the fourth temptation, Ruusbroec is even more severe: 'These are the people who do not practice virtue and whose understanding is exempt of images. They find their essential being in themselves and possess it in the naked idleness of their spirit and nature. For they lapse into a blind idle emptiness of their essential being and they no longer pay attention to any good works, outer or inner' (*Temptations* E157–E161). In contrast to these temptations, Ruusbroec says: 'I want us to observe our inner being still more closely so that we may discover the wealth of God that lives in our spirit more clearly and more closely' (*Temptations* E214–E215). 'The wealth of God that lives in our spirit' is evidently the complete opposite of 'a blind idle emptiness of their essential being.' These ideas may well refer to Ruusbroec's spiritual interpretation of his move to the forest.

The Little Book of Enlightenment (*Dat boecsken der verclaringhe*)

The occasion of the writing of this book is well attested. Ruusbroec wrote it in approximately 1362, after his visit to Charterhouse at Herne. Having obtained a copy of *The Realm of Lovers*—which, as mentioned above, was not intended for publication—the Carthusians had been struck by Ruusbroec's use of the expression 'without difference' (*sonder differencie*) in his description of the highest union between the human person and God. The Carthusians were apparently perplexed by the expression, thinking it might imply that the creature and the Creator become identical—an idea obviously contrary to the Christian faith. The monks clearly appreciated the importance of the issue in mystical theology. Indeed, an unbridgeable divide or 'difference' between God and the human person would evidently present a problem in light of Jesus'

prayer that the apostles, 'be one even as we are one' (Jn. 17:22)—an issue explicitly addressed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.[54]

The monks invited Ruusbroec to clarify the statement, an invitation Ruusbroec accepted. He wrote *Little Book* following his visit to Herne, as he himself states:

> Some of my friends [the Carthusians at Herne] desire, and have prayed me to show and explain in a few words, to the best of my ability, and most precisely and clearly, the truth that I understand and feel about the most profound doctrine that I have written, so that my words may not mislead anyone but may serve to improve each one; and that I most willingly do.[55]

Interestingly, Ruusbroec made no concessions whatsoever. Despite the fact he was well aware of the problematic issue, his position is in no way weakened. Before explaining in more detail, he summarizes his teaching as follows:

---

54 'When, therefore, the Truth prays to the Father for those faithful to him, saying I wish that "they may be one in us just as we are one" [Jn. 17:22], this word "one" means for the faithful a union of love in grace, and for the divine persons a unity of identity in nature, as the Truth says elsewhere, "You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" [Mt. 5:48], as if he were to say more plainly, "You must be perfect" in the perfection of grace, "just as your Father is perfect" in the perfection that is his by nature, each in his own way. For between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater dissimilarity cannot be seen between them.' *Cum vero Veritas pro fidelibus suis orat ad Patrem, Volo* (*inquens*) *'ut ipsi sint unum in nobis, sicut et nos unum sumus': hoc nomen 'unum' pro fidelibus quidem accipitur, ut intelligatur unio caritatis in gratia, pro personis vero divinis, ut attendatur identitatis unitas in natura, quemadmodum alibi Veritas ait: 'Estote perfecti, sicut et Pater vester caelestis perfectus est,' ac si diceret manifestius: 'Estotete perfecti' perfectione gratiae, 'sicut Pater vester caelestis perfectus est' perfectione naturae, utraque videlicet suo modo: quia inter Creatorem et creaturam non potest similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda.* Denzinger (1976), nº 806.

55 *Selke van minen vrienden begheren ende hebben mi ghebeden, dat ic met corten waerden tonen ende verclaren soude, na mijn vermoghen, die naeste ende die claerste waerheit die ic versta ende ghevoele van alle der hoechster leren die ic ghescreven hebbe, op dat minre waerde niemen vererghert en werde maer ieghewelc ghebetert. Ende dit wille ic gherne doen. Ic wille die oetmoedeghe, die doghede ende waerheit minnen, met der hulpen gods leren ende verclaren. Ende met den selven waerden salic die valsche hoverdeghe van binnen ontsaten ende verdonkeren, want mine waerde selen hen contrarie vallen ende onghelijc. Ende dat en mach die hoverdeghe niet gheliden, hi en werts altoes gheerghert. Little Book* 24–29. The expression 'so that my words may not mislead anyone but may serve to improve each one' appears to allude to the end of the bull *In agro dominico*.

> See, I have thus said that the contemplative lover of God is united with God by intermediary, and again without intermediary, and thirdly without difference or distinction. And this I find in nature and in grace and in glory. I have thus further stated that no creature can become or be so holy that it loses its own condition of creature and becomes God, not even the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ: it will remain eternally creature and other than God. Nevertheless we must all be lifted up above ourselves in God and be one spirit with God if we would be blessed.[56]

These brief sentences contain the central elements of all Ruusbroec's literary work and thus are worthy of an independent study. Moreover, every word in this quote about the 'contemplative lover of God' is significant. Ruusbroec does not discuss either those who do not love God or those who—though they may love God—have not received the gift of contemplation. The lover is related to God in three ways: indirectly, directly, and 'without difference.' These are three qualifications of mutual relationality, not three forms of being. According to Ruusbroec, these three manners occur in nature (i.e., independent of baptism), in grace (i.e., the life of the faithful), and in glory (i.e., life after death). Ruusbroec then emphasizes that the human person never becomes God through an ontological transformation, as he considers this simply impossible. Finally, he says that abiding happiness can never be found in self-satisfied resting within the self and can only result from a loving life communion with the other.

It is highly doubtful that all the Carthusians at Herne were convinced by Ruusbroec's explanations, either in speech or in writing. Brother Gerard's commentary indicates that though the community was much edified by the humble, religious, and devout man, they nonetheless considered the expression 'without difference' unfortunate:

> When we first heard the expression 'without difference,' we were perplexed by it because without 'difference' means the same as without

56 *Siet, ic hebbe aldus gheseghet: dat de scouwende minnere gods met gode verenecht es overmidts middel, ende oec sonder middel, ende ten derden male sonder differentie ochte onderscheet. Ende dit vende ic in naturen ende in der gratien ende oec in der glorien. Ic hebbe voert gheseghet, dat en ghene creature en mach soe heilech werden noch sijn, dat si hare ghescapenheit verliese ende god werde, noch oec die ziele ons heren Jhesu Cristi: die sal eweleke creature bliven ende een ander van gode. Nochtan moete wi alle boven ons selven in gode verhaven sijn ende een geest met gode in minnen, sele wi salech sijn. Ende hier omme merct mine waerde ende mine meininghe, ende verstaet mi wel rechte, welc die wise ende die op ganc si onser ewegher salecheit. Little Book* 34–44.

> 'dissimilarity,' without any 'alterity,' 'exactly the same,' without 'distinction.' And yet it is impossible for the soul to become so united to God that they become one being, as he himself writes there. The question is thus, why does he call the third union without 'difference'? As to this, I think the following: the first union he calls with intermediary and the second he calls without intermediary and for the third he wanted to express an even closer union but he could not express it in one word without circumlocution except by using without 'difference,' even though it was a little too high to express his meaning. He explains how far too high it is using Christ's words, since He prayed to his Father that all his beloved should become one the way He is one with the Father. Although Christ prayed thus, He did not mean that all should become one with the Father the way He has become one—one substance in the Godhead—because that is impossible. Rather, He meant that they should become—as He is—one enjoyment and one blessedness with the Father without difference.[57]

Upon closer inspection, this misunderstanding is significant, because it concerns a different conception of the foundation of human existence itself. In the following passage, Ruusbroec clarifies the third form of union, namely, union 'without difference':

57 *Al sonder ander verclaringhe die hi in dit boec doet, soe verclaert hi drierhande eninghe die des goets menschen siele mach hebben met gode. Die ierste es met middel, die ander sonder middel, die derde sonder differencie ofte sonder onderscheit. Inden iersten lude des woerts 'sonder differencie' soe stoten wi ons aen die reden, want sonder differencie ludet alsoe vele alse sonder enighe onghelijcheit, sonder enighe anderheit, al dat selve, sonder onderscheit. Nochtan en mach dat niet sijn dat die siele alsoe gheneghet werde met gode, dat si te gader werden een wesen, ghelijc dat hi oec selve daer seit. Nu is te vraghen waer om dat hi dan die derde eninghe noemt: sonder differencie. Hiertoe peinsic aldus. Die ierste eninghe hadde hi ghenoemt: overmits middel, ende die ander: sonder middel, ende ten derden mael woude hi setten noch ene nare eninghe, mer die en conste hi niet tenen woerde, sonder circumlocutie, niet ghenoemen hi en nam dit woert: sonder differencie, al waest hem een luttel te hoghe om te utene ende te wordene sine meininghe. Ende daer om, hoe vele dat hem te hoghe was dat verclaert hi met Cristus woerden, dair hi bad sinen vader dat alle sijn gheminden volbracht worden in een, also hi een is metten vader; want al bat Cristus aldus, hi en meinde niet alsoe een als hi een worden is metten vader, een enighe substancie der godheit; want dat is onmoghelijc; mer alsoe een als hi sonder differencie een ghebruken ende een salicheit is metten vader.* De Vreese (1895), pp. 17–18.

Hereafter follows the unity without difference, for the love of God is not only to be considered as flowing out with all good into unity, but it is also above all distinction in essential enjoyment according to the bare essence of the Divinity. And for this reason enlightened men have found within themselves an essential inward gazing above all reason and without reason and an enjoyable inclination surpassing all modes and all essence, sinking away from themselves into a modeless abyss of fathomless beatitude, where the Trinity of the Divine Persons possess their nature in essential unity. See, here the beatitude is so simple and so without mode that therein all essential gazing, inclination and distinction of creatures pass away. For all spirits thus raised up melt away and are annihilated by reason of enjoyment in God's essence which is the superessence of all essence. There they fall away from themselves and are lost in a bottomless unknowing. There all clarity is turned back to darkness, there where the three Persons give way to the essential unity and without distinction enjoy essential beatitude. This beatitude is essential to God alone and to all spirits it is superessential. For no created essence can be one with God's essence and perish of itself, for then the creature would become God, which is impossible. For the essence of God can neither diminish nor increase; nothing can be taken from Him, neither can it be added to Him. Nevertheless, all loving spirits are one enjoyment and one beatitude with God without difference. For the blessed essence which is the enjoyment of God himself and all his beloved, is so plain and simple that there is neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Spirit, according to personal distinction, nor any creature. But there all the enlightened spirits are raised out of themselves into an enjoyment without mode that is overflowing above all fullness that any creature has ever received or ever may receive; for there all the elevated spirits in their superessence are one enjoyment and one beatitude with God without difference. There the beatitude is so simple that no distinction can enter into it evermore. Christ desired this when He prayed his heavenly Father that all his beloved should be brought to perfect union, just as He is one with the Father in enjoyment, by means of the Holy Spirit. This He prayed and desired that he in us and we in Him and in his heavenly Father should become one in enjoyment, by means of the Holy Spirit. And that, I think, is the most loving prayer that Christ ever made for our beatitude.[58]

58 *Ende hier na volget die enecheit sonder differentie. Want die minne gods en es niet allene anetesiene alse utevloeiende met allen goede, ende in treckende in enecheit, maer si es oec boven al onderscheet, in weselec ghebruken na den bloeten wesene der godheit. Ende*

Ruusbroec clearly specifies that 'without difference' in no way indicates a fusion between the human person and God; God and the human person do not become one entity, since that would simply be impossible. The expression 'without difference' refers to the mutual love between the two partners and the fruition of this love. The two lovers share a mutual gift of the self to one another; the one lives in the other and finds joy in the other. These relational properties are reflected in the dynamic relationship of the three Persons of the Trinity. They are one with each other in love, without fusion. According to Ruusbroec, human beings have the potential to participate fully in the Trinitarian relationship.[59]

Unfortunately, the expression 'without difference' (*sonder onderscheid* or *sonder differentie*) was often misunderstood in line with nominalist logic, and it was assumed to refer to ontological identity. Brother Gerard's formulation is particularly revealing in this regard. Interpreting Ruusbroec's

---

hieromme hebben die verclaerde menschen in hen bevonden een weselec instaren boven redene ende sonder redene, ende .i. ghebrukelec neighen, dore lidende alle wisen ende alle wesene, ontsinkende hen selven in .i. wiseloes abis grondeloser salecheit, daer die drieheit der godleker persone hare nature besitten in weseleker enecheit. Siet, daer es die salecheit alsoe eenvoldech ende alsoe wiseloes, dat daer inne vergheet al weseleec staren, neighen ende onderscheet der creaturen. Want alle verhavene gheeste versmelten ende vernieuten overmidts ghebruken in gods wesen, dat alre wesene overwesen es. Daer ontfallen si hen selven in ene verlorenheit ende in onwetene sonder gront. Daer es alle claerheit wederboecht in deemsterheit, daer die .iii. persone wiken der weseleker enecheit ende sonder onderscheet ghebruken weseleker salecheit. Dese salecheit es gode allene weseleec ende allen gheesten overweseleec. Want gheen ghescaepen wesen en mach met gods wesene eensijn ende te gaen in hem selven. Want so worde de creature god, dat onmoeghelec es. Want gods wesen en mach menderen noch meerren, noch heme en mach niets niet avegaen noch toegaen. Nochtan sijn alle minnende gheeste een ghebruken ende ene salecheit met gode sonder differentie. Want dat saleghe wesen dat gods ghebruken es ende alle siere gheminder, dat es alsoe sempel eenvoldech, dat daer en es noch vader noch sone noch heileghe geest na persoenleken onderscede, noch ghene creature. Maer alle die verclarde gheeste sijn hen selven daer onthoghet in .i. wiseloes ghebruken, dat ene overvloet es boven alle die volheit die eneghe creature ontfaen hevet ochte emmermeer ontfaen mach. Want daer sijn alle verhavene geeste in hare overwesen .i. ghebruken ende ene salecheit met gode sonder differentie. Ende daer es die salecheit alsoe eenvoldech, dat daer nemmermeer onderscheet inne comen en mach. Ende dit begherde Cristus, daer hi bat sinen hemelschen vader, dat alle sine gheminde volbracht worden in een, alsoe alse hi een es met den vader in ghebrukene overmids den heileghen geest. Alsoe bat hi ende begherde, dat hi in ons, ende wi in heme ende in sinen hemelschen vader een worden in ghebrukene overmids den heilegen gheest. Ende dit dunct mi dat minlecste ghebet dat Cristus ie ghedede tote onser salecheit. Little Book 438–474.

59 Faesen (2013a).

expression in terms of the more common use of words such as *distinctio* or *differentia* in medieval Latin, the expression clearly need not necessarily refer to such identity. Indeed, *distinctio* usually means division, separation, or boundary—in music it may be used to indicate a pause or a comma (as a punctuation mark).[60] In Habel's lexicon, it is translated as 'Unterscheidung, Absonderung; Abgrenzung, Grenze; Abschnitt.'[61] For *differentia*, Du Cange notes *controversia*, *contentio*, implying the antonym *concordantia* (*differre* may, for example, also mean *abscedere*: to remove oneself).[62]

The Seven Enclosures (*Vanden seven sloten*)

We know that Ruusbroec wrote this book for one specific person, the Poor Clare Margriet van Meerbeke, who lived in Brussels. We also know that it was written after the community at Groenendaal had adopted the Rule of Augustine, i.e., after 1350. It is interesting to note, moreover, that the convent of the Poor Clares in Brussels to which Margriet belonged was founded in 1346. A letter dated 1346 from Ruusbroec to Margriet van Meerbeke is extant, proving that their correspondence was of some duration. Ruusbroec also clearly felt personally involved in the new community, which was explicitly intended to be a contemplative convent. The fact that Ruusbroec wrote *Enclosures* for Margriet need certainly not be interpreted in an exclusive sense. Although he addresses her personally, he indirectly also addresses every member of the young community. In the Middle Ages, letter-writing was rarely a strictly personal affair. The work is presented as a program for the contemplative life, based on a number of concrete elements from the life of an enclosed nun. Ruusbroec relates each of these to a spiritual experience, which results in contemplation. He discusses Matins, the Eucharist, service in the community, illness, and behavior towards fellow sisters, meals, dress, and Vespers.

The middle of the work is a somewhat longer exposition that forms the book's structural core—on 'seven enclosures' and 'three lives.' The 'seven enclosures' remind the reader that the Poor Clares lived in enclosed convents. The 'enclosure' serves to express the intimacy with God. Ruusbroec describes this intimacy in increasingly inner ways. He begins with the physical seclusion of the *clausura*. He then describes the orientation of inner attention (second enclosure), the love for Jesus Christ (third enclosure), the sole preference for the will of God (fourth enclosure), contemplation—which Ruusbroec refers to

60 E.g., Latham & Howlett (1986), p. 698. Du Cange (1884), p. 145, explains it as *divisio seu pausa*; Maigne d'Arnis (1858), col. 740, explains it as *comma quo sensus distinguitur*.

61 Habel (1931), col. 117.

62 Du Cange (1884), p. 112.

as 'gazing and contemplating, with simple vision, in the divine light' (*starende ende scouwende met eenvuldegen gesichte in godleken lichte*)[63]—(fifth enclosure), becoming one spirit with God in love (sixth enclosure), and finally, the most profound silent rest in God (seventh enclosure). The structure of this description reveals that the deepest intimacy with God is located 'in' activity, not above or beyond it. We find a similar structure in other mystical works, such as *The Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila.

A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness (*Een spieghel der eeuwigher salicheit*)

Ruusbroec research often identifies this work as being written for the same addressee as *The Seven Enclosures*, the Poor Clare Margriet van Meerbeke. This claim, which is based on the following notation in one of the manuscripts—'This book was written by the Reverend John of Ruusbroec in the year of Our Lord 1359, and he sent it to a nun of the Order of Clare' (*Dit boec heeft ghemaect heer Jan Ruusbroec int Jair ons* (*Heeren*) *m.ccc. ende lix ende heeftet ghesonnen eenre nonnen van clara*)—may not be correct. Strictly speaking, we may only conclude that Ruusbroec sent the work to a Poor Clare, not that he wrote it specifically for Margriet van Meerbeke. Indeed, a number of passages in the work appear rather strange when we assume that it was written for a female religious. More probably, it was written for a different group of readers and later sent to a Poor Clare (possibly the same Margriet van Meerbeke). A number of manuscripts note that Ruusbroec wrote the book 'after he had become a monk,' i.e., after the community at Groenendaal had adopted Augustine's Rule in 1350. The 1359 dating, mentioned in only one manuscript, may well be correct.

The title of the work refers to a common tradition in spiritual literature that often uses the term *speculum* (mirror). We may cite two examples Ruusbroec undoubtedly knew: *The Mirror of Faith* (*Speculum fidei*) by William of Saint-Thierry, and *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (*Mirouer des simples ames*) by Marguerite Porete. Ruusbroec's *Mirror* treats a number of themes that recur throughout his works. It has a tripartite central structure: (1) the 'working, virtuous life,' (2) the 'inner life,' and (3) 'contemplative life.' In this book, however, Ruusbroec focuses particularly on the Eucharist. The second part contains an extensive excursus on the Sacrament, which explains why some manuscripts refer to this work as a book on the Eucharist. The excursus is intended, however, to clarify how Christian spiritual life fundamentally consists of life communion with the person of Christ, who is a living mirror of

63 *Enclosures* 579–580.

eternal blessedness. Geert Grote translated the work into Latin, from which we may conclude that he deemed it suitable for wider circulation.

The book contains a clear, concise passage that explains how we are one with God—entirely consonant with Ruusbroec's other works—and he adds:

> When I write that we are one with God, it is to be understood: in love, not in essence, nor in nature; for God's essence is uncreated, and our essence is created. And this is unlike without measure, God and creature. And therefore, even though it may unite, it cannot become one. If our essence came to naught, we would not know, or love or be blessed. But our created essence is to be beheld as a wild, waste desert, wherein God lives who reigns over us. And in that desert we must wander modelessly and without manner. For we cannot come out of our essential being into our superessential being otherwise than with love. And therefore we are blessed in our essential being, if we live in love. And we are blessedness in God's essential being, if we, in love, have died to ourselves in his enjoyment. We are always living in our own essential being through love. And we are always dying in God's essential being through having joy. And therefore this is called a dying life and a living dying, for we live with God and we die in God. Blessed are the dead who live and die thus, because they have been made heirs in God and in his realm. [cf. Apoc. 14:13][64]

A striking marginal note in Latin was added above this passage in the Groenendaal MS:

64 *Ende waer ic sette dat wi een met gode sijn, dat es te verstane in minnen, niet in wesene noch in natueren. Want gods wesen es onghescapen ende onse wesenes ghescapen. Ende dit es sonder mate onghelijc, god ende creatuere. Ende hier omme, al maecht vereeneghen, en mach niet een werden. Ghinghe oec onse wesen te niete, soe en souden wi niet kinnen noch minnen noch salegh sijn. Maer onse ghescapene wesen es ane te siene alse eene welde, wueste wustine, daer god in leeft, die ons regeert. Ende in dese wustine moeten wi dolen wiselooes ende sonder maniere. Want wi en connen ute onsen wesene niet comen in onse overwesen anders dan met minnen. Ende hier omme sijn wi salegh in onse wesen, eest dat wi leven in minnen. Ende wi sijn salegheit in gods wesen, eest dat wi in minnen ons selfs ghestorven sijn in sijn ghebruken. Altoes leven wi in onse eighen wesen overmids minne. Ende altoes sterven wi in gods wesen overmids ghebruken. Ende hier omme es dit ghenoemt een stervende leven ende .i. levende sterven. Want wi leven met gode ende wi sterven in gode. Salegh sijn de dooede die aldus leven ende sterven, want si sijn gheerft in gode ende in sijn rike. Mirror* 2149–2165.

> What is written here exonerates and justifies the author of this book, who was declared unsound by the Chancellor of [the University of] Paris concerning a number of other passages in his work. The chancellor was insufficiently informed, however, of the right intention of the clearly enlightened Father who wrote this book.[65]

***The Seven Rungs* (*Vanden seven trappen*)**

It is sometimes suggested that, like *Mirror, The Seven Rungs* was also written for Margriet van Meerbeke, based on the fact that Ruusbroec makes extensive use of the metaphor of choir singing to describe spiritual life. Some associate this with the fact that Margriet van Meerbeke was the *cantrix* (precentor of choral prayer) in her convent. This reasoning is not particularly convincing, especially considering the metaphor's development in the work. Indeed, again we find a number of passages that lead us to suspect that it was written for a group of (probably male) readers rather than one recipient. In any case, the work clearly appears to have been written for members of a religious community.[66] This book was also translated into Latin by Willem Jordaens.

Though *Rungs* is one of Ruusbroec's shorter works, it is by no means of lesser importance. It treats the depth of the relationship with God—union with God in Love and the life of charity—which Ruusbroec calls 'a holy life.' Ruusbroec again discusses the tripartite active, inner, and contemplative life. Starting from the virtuous life, Ruusbroec subsequently describes the inner nobility and, finally, the fathomless depth of spiritual life. The treatise's title leads us to suspect that it contains a sevenfold division, but the number seven is by no means of primary structural importance. In the middle of the text, Ruusbroec describes the inner life in terms of the hierarchy of angelic choirs. Unfortunately, to the taste of contemporary readers at least, his description appears rather labored. The two final chapters of the text (the sixth and seventh 'rungs') are among Ruusbroec's most profound reflections on the contemplative life.

As in *Mirror, The Seven Rungs* also refers to a famous metaphor in the tradition of spiritual literature. The metaphor of rungs—which was used as early as Plato (*Symposium* 211c)—is very common. We may refer here, for example, to the short but masterful *Four Degrees of Violent Love* (*De quattuor gradibus violentae caritatis*) by Richard of Saint-Victor († 1173), a text Ruusbroec

65 *Quod subscribitur rectificat et excusat auctorem presentis libri in alio quodam operis passu reprobato a cancellario parisiensi non satis informato de recta intentione illuminatissimi patris huius voluminis*. Cf. *Mirror*, p. 405, note at 1. 2148.

66 See Ampe (1956b) and the introduction to *Rungs*, pp. 13–16.

undoubtedly knew. As mentioned, this work makes use of the metaphor of choir song (*Rungs* 801–942), and Ruusbroec uses terms that appear to refer to polyphonic singing ('. . . the tones and the ornamentation and its descant' (*die thone ende die floruere ende sijn discant*), *Rungs* 875).[67]

The Twelve Beguines (*Vanden XII beghinen*)

It is unclear whether this relatively heterogeneous book was left incomplete upon Ruusbroec's death. The title refers to the passage in verse form with which the work begins and in which 12 beguines each recite a verse in turn. Nonetheless, this is not the central theme of the book. One might consider the work a compilation of four separate treatises: (1) on the contemplative life, (2) on heresies concerning contemplative love, which are contrasted with true love, (3) on cosmology and astrology as metaphors for spiritual life, and (4) on the Passion narrative, subdivided according to the liturgy of the hours. It is occasionally suggested that the works were not compiled by Ruusbroec himself but by his confreres. We know that the work existed as an independent volume by the end of Ruusbroec's life, however, since Geert Grote mentions it in one of his letters to Ruusbroec dated *c*.1380. Mikel M. Kors, the editor of the work in the *Opera omnia*, has argued, in contrast, that the work was written as a whole, and in the social context of *c*.1365. Indeed, that period saw concerted, widespread prosecutions of heretical beguines and beghards. Kors suggests that the first and second parts of the book are Ruusbroec's attempt to present his teaching to a wider audience in an accessible and 'safe' manner. The passage on the liturgy of the hours thus must also be considered from this perspective: praying the breviary in the vernacular was becoming more popular at the time.

This work is also important because it contains one of Ruusbroec's rare references to himself—a short autobiographical reflection in which he declares himself to be a faithful member of the Church. He states that if his work falls under suspicion or condemnation, he will contentedly cease writing and keep his experiences and positions to himself.[68]

---

67 A relatively recent musical development at the time, cf. Warnar (2007), p. 24; Ruusbroec's description of the various voices with which Christ is 'called in' in *Temptations* may contain a similar allusion: 'clearest voice'—*claerste stemme*, 255; 'most gracious voice'—*gracioeste stemme*, 260; 'voice of greatest joy'—*blijdste stemme*, 267; 'sweetest voice'—*suetste stemme*, 273; 'most hidden voice'—*verborghenste stemme*, 280; 'eternal silence'—*eewich swighen*, 285.

68 'I renounce myself and subject myself to the eternal truth, and to the faith of Holy Christendom, and to the teachers who, by the Holy Spirit, have explained the Holy Scripture. But what I feel must remain mine; I cannot drive it out of my spirit. Even though I should gain the whole world, I cannot hesitate nor distrust Jesus; He would

Letters

Only a few fragments of Ruusbroec's correspondence remain. Laurentius Surius († 1578) translated seven of his letters into Latin, from which we may conclude that the Middle Dutch texts still existed in the 16th century. The extant letters are addressed to Margriet van Meerbeke, to the widow of Sir Jan van Culemborg (about whom nothing further is known), to three noblemen who had withdrawn to a hermitage near the Benedictine Abbey of St Panthaleon in Cologne, to a devout maiden in Mechelen, and to a number of ladies and an aristocratic widow whose names we do not know. Recently, a previously unknown letter by Ruusbroec was discovered in Latin translation.[69] Generally, we may state that the letters contain advice concerning spiritual life and contain many common themes and statements.

Works Attributed to Ruusbroec

The older editions of Ruusbroec's works contain a number of works attributed to Ruusbroec. For example, the edition of 1932 contains the treatise *The XII Virtues*, which is ascribed to Ruusbroec in several manuscripts. Shortly afterward, the work was discovered to have been written by Godfried van Wevel and therefore was no longer included in later editions.[70]

The 1944–1948 edition attributes *The Gloss on the Our Father* (*Vader-ons glose*) and a sermon entitled *On the Blessed Sacrament* (*Vanden heylighen sacramente*) to Ruusbroec. The editor, Leonce Reypens, considered it possible that the first text, which occurs only in the composite manuscript by Jan van Meerhout (Brussels, Royal Library 1086–1115) and is ascribed to Ruusbroec,[71] was actually written by him. Reypens suggested that it may have been an excerpt from a letter.[72] The latter text occurs in MS Brussels, Royal Library 388

---

condemn me. If I hear anything opposed to this, then I will keep silent; about virtue and vice I will write little more.' (*Ic vertye mijns ende late my onder de eewighe waerheit ende onder dat ghelove der heiligher kerstenheit ende onder die leeraren die de heilighe scriftuere overmids den heilighen gheest hebben ontbonden. Maer dat ic ghevoele, dat moet my bliven: ic en macht uut mijnen gheeste niet verdriven. Al soudt my alle die werelt vromen, ic en mocht niet twifelen noch Jhesum mestrouwen, dat hy mi soude verdoemen. Alsic contrarie hore, dan willic swighen. Van duechden ende van onduechden willic luttel meer scriven.*) *Beguines* 2c: 1307–1314.

69 Published by Schepers (2001).

70 A summary of the arguments is provided by Ruh (1999b), pp. 118–123.

71 *Ex libro eiusdam felicissimi Patris <Johannis Ruusbroec> de oratione, in quo exponit dominicam orationem scilicet pater noster*. *Werken* (1944–1948), vol. IV, p. 269, cf. the description of this manuscript (Pp) in de Vreese (1900–1902), p. 553.

72 Reypens (1943a); *Werken* (1944–1948) IV, pp. LII–LV.

and may, according to Reypens, also have been written by Ruusbroec, or it may have been a sermon intended to be preached to the lay brothers.[73]

The same edition also includes three texts that occur in Surius' translation of Ruusbroec's *Opera omnia*, namely, a brief summary of spiritual life (*Totius vitae spiritualis summa*), two poems, and a prayer. Reypens did not consider the first text, of which the Middle Dutch original is extant, to be written by Ruusbroec. The poems are of greater note.[74] Robrecht Lievens later discovered a Middle Dutch version, though Surius had access to a text that has two extra verses. Reypens did not consider it impossible that the poems were by Ruusbroec, Axters was highly dismissive,[75] and Warnar argues in favor of the earlier position.[76] None of these commentators note that these poems display strong similarity to *Mengeldichten* 17–29 by Pseudo-Hadewijch, to which Ruusbroec often refers.[77] Of particular note in this regard is the unusual expression *verre bi*, an equivalent of Marguerite Porete's *Loingprès*. Whether Ruusbroec actually wrote the poems remains an open question. It is clear, however, that they were written in the spiritual milieu of which he was a prominent exponent.

According to Reypens, the prayer published by Surius contains few elements on which to base the assumption that it was authored by Ruusbroec. Finally, two brief excerpts have also been ascribed to the mystic: *On the Sacrament of the Altar* (*Vanden sacramente des outaers*), and *On the Distinction Between Sight, Examination and Consideration* (*Tusschen onderscheit van sien, aensien ende besien*). The former may have been authored by Ruusbroec, though it primarily contains a short exposition copied from Albert the Great. About the latter, Reypens states 'these texts contain nothing to exclude Ruusbroec's authorship, but nor do they contain anything that especially indicates it.'[78]

---

73 Cf. further Ampe (1964), pp. 19–22.

74 See Appendix Two in this volume.

75 Axters (1953), pp. 240–241.

76 Warnar (2007), p. 23.

77 See our other chapter and Appendix One in this volume.

78 *Werken* (1944–1948), vol. IV, p. LXVII.

Ruusbroec in Edition: Manuscript and Print

Guido de Baere

This article provides a comprehensive overview of the circulation of Ruusbroec's oeuvre in manuscript form, naturally without discussing each of the hundreds of individual manuscripts. As to printed editions, our scope extends until the end of the 19th century. Regarding editions of texts in Middle Dutch dating from the same century, we will only mention editions of the complete works. Readers who desire more information are referred to the bibliography by Robrecht Roemans.[1] A recent bibliography of all printed works containing texts by Ruusbroec or information about him has been prepared by the late Ms Hilda Van Assche but has not yet been published. For the tradition of Ruusbroec's works in Latin, see Kees Schepers' chapter in this volume.

The Middle Dutch Manuscript Tradition[2]

The transmission of Ruusbroec's works in manuscript extends from the second half of the 14th century until the 17th, with a peak in the second half of the 15th century. As Kienhorst and Kors described in their article about the formation of collections of Ruusbroec's oeuvre,[3] the type of manuscripts that transmitted his texts evolved. In the second half of the 14th century, the manuscripts contained only one text. From the third quarter of that century onwards, however, collections of some or all works began to appear. In the 15th century, manuscripts with a selection of works prevailed, though new codices with the complete works were also created. Finally, in the 16th century, copies of Ruusbroec's works became rare and eventually disappeared entirely in the 17th century.

The 14th Century

Ruusbroec in Small Size

The earliest transmission of Ruusbroec's works is to be found in parchment manuscripts of small size (maximum 180 × 135 mm) and without division into

1 Roemans (1932), pp. 336–359.

2 This section is indebted to the landmark article Kienhorst & Kors (1998a). In some respects, this study is superseded by the more recent, startling research of Kwakkel (2002). It also borrowed from Jan van Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 5–6, pp. 69–71.

3 See note 2.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_005

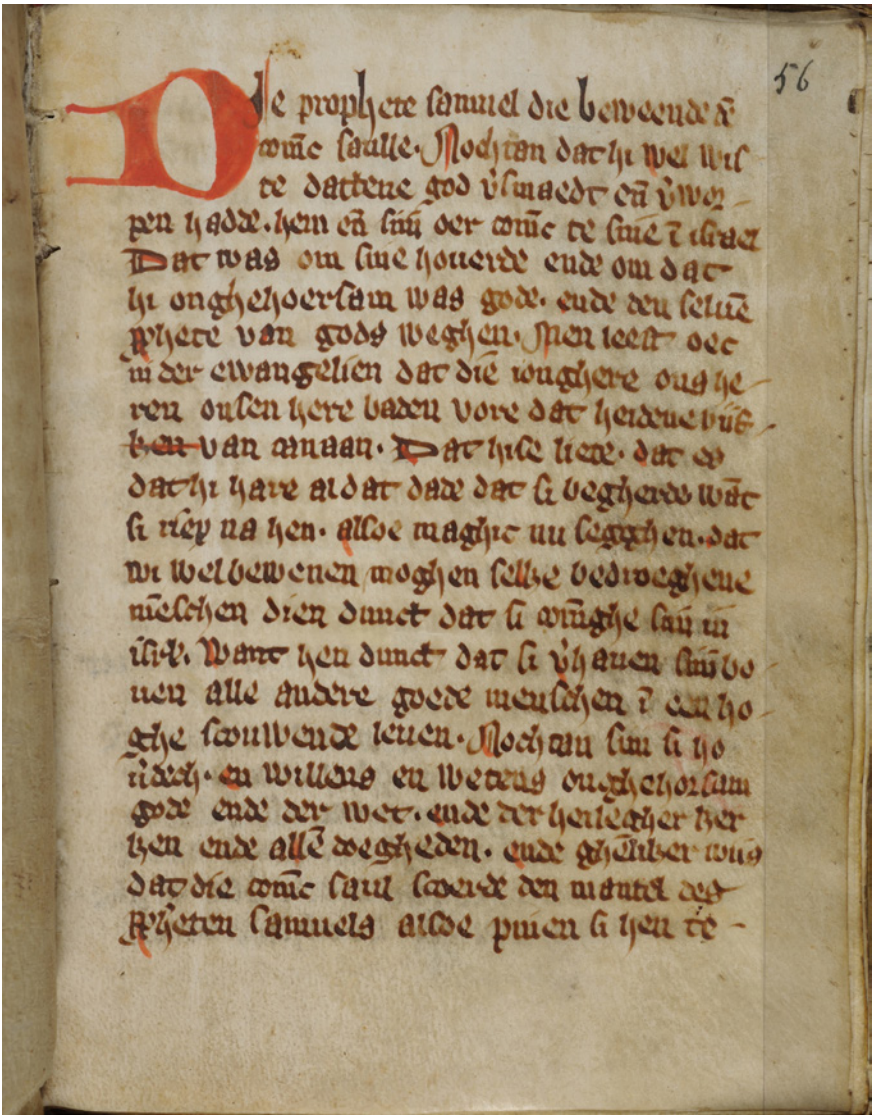


ILLUSTRATION 1 *Manuscript Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 3067–73, fol. 56r* (Little Book)

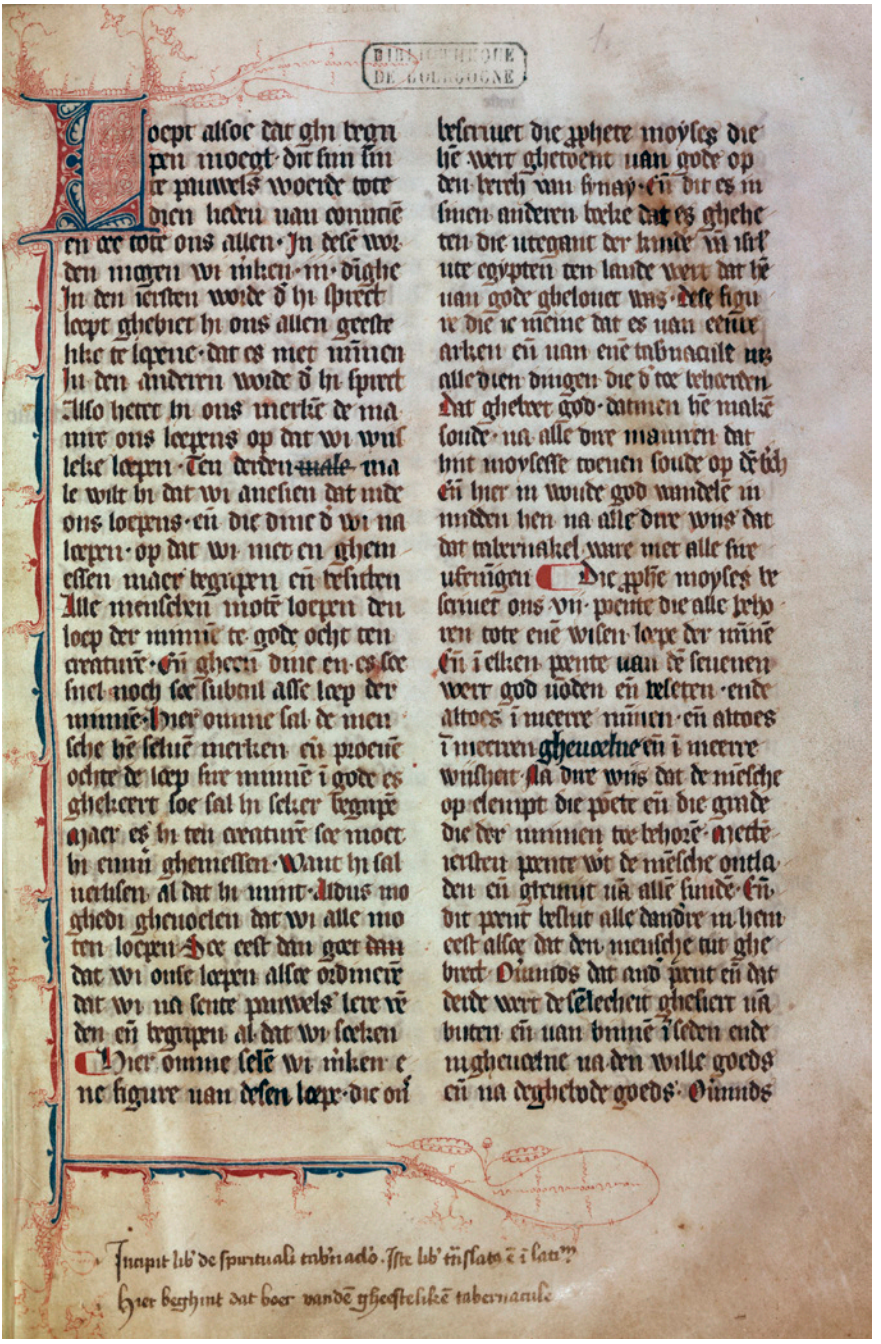


ILLUSTRATION 2 *Manuscript Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 19295–97, fol. 3r* (Tabernacle)

columns. They contained only one treatise. Later, they were bound together with other texts into composite volumes with heterogeneous content. Size rather than content was apparently the principal criterion when compiling separate manuscripts into one volume.

Of the ten preserved manuscripts of this type, six belonged to the monastery of Rooklooster (Oudergem near Brussels),[4] which, like Groenendaal—where Ruusbroec moved in 1343—was inhabited by a community of regular canons.[5] The fact that Groenendaal did not preserve any of these small manuscripts is probably due to the burning of the monastery in 1435.

First Collections

In the 1360s, the monastery of Groenendaal planned a manuscript that would contain the complete works of Ruusbroec in chronological order. This codex, containing nine treatises,[6] was made between 1359 and 1370. However, Ruusbroec wrote two more treatises after the volume's completion: the short *Little Book* and the long *Beguines*. As it was not possible to add them both to the already existing manuscript, it was taken apart and the 11 treatises were divided into two volumes of more or less the same size. This must have happened at the latest shortly after Ruusbroec's death. The rearrangement partially disturbed the chronological order. Of the two volumes, only the first has been preserved: Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 19295–97 (siglum: A). It contains, consecutively, *Tabernacle, Mirror*, and *Rungs*. It is unclear to what extent a third volume with the Latin translations of Ruusbroec's oeuvre was planned in the original project. A volume with the Latin translation of *Tabernacle, Espousals, Rungs*, and *Stone* was indicated in the 17th century, but it was later

4 The six manuscripts that were owned by Rooklooster are: Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, M 380 (siglum: Pl); Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 3067–73 (siglum: Vv) and 3091 (siglum: B); Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 8217 (siglum: c) and Bibliothèque Mazarine, 920 (siglum: w); and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, s.n. 12.899 (siglum: We2). It is not definite, however, that any of these manuscripts was made at Rooklooster, whereas MS B undoubtedly was and MS We2 was possibly produced at the Charterhouse of Herne (see Kwakkel (2002), pp. 300, 237 and 279). The four manuscripts outside Rooklooster are: Antwerp, Bibliotheek van het Ruusbroecgenootschap, hs. Neerl. 15/3 (fragment with excerpts, siglum: An); The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 71 H 53 (siglum: Aa; burned in Leuven in 1914); Leiden, University Library, BPL 3252(4) (fragment with excerpts, siglum: Bo); and Leuven-Heverlee, Abdij van Park, hs. 17 (siglum: He).

5 From that year on until 1350, Ruusbroec and his companions lived as hermits without a canonical rule. In 1350 they adopted the Rule of Augustine.

6 These treatises are: *Realm, Espousals, Stone, Temptations, Faith, Tabernacle, Enclosures, Mirror*, and *Rungs*.

lost.[7] Early authors also mention a separate book with the letters of Ruusbroec, but its existence is shrouded in even greater mystery.[8]

Since the Groenendaal codex was composed during Ruusbroec's lifetime, its version may be considered authorized by him. It is obvious, however, that the texts collected in the manuscript were slightly redacted for that purpose and that other 14th-century manuscripts occasionally offer older readings of the text.[9]

In addition to the Groenendaal initiative, another project to collect works by the *doctor admirabilis* was launched by the Carthusian monk Gerard of Herne, who knew Ruusbroec personally. He collected five treatises[10] and provided his collection with a prologue which contains precious information about Ruusbroec's life and his works. From this prologue we know that between 1360 and 1370 Ruusbroec, as an aging man, had taken the trouble to visit the Charterhouse of Herne to explain some daring passages from his first work, *Realm*, to the brothers there.[11] Gerard's manuscript has not been preserved, but his prologue has been transmitted in two manuscripts containing the complete works: Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 3416–24 (siglum: D), and Ghent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 693 (siglum: G).

The 15th Century

The 15th century saw two types of manuscript: those intended to gather the complete works, and those with selective collections.

Complete Collections

The first type is represented by three manuscripts. One of them, MS G, is a copy of the aforementioned two volumes of the Groenendaal MS containing the

7 See Jan van Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 5, vol. 1, pp. 70, 74. These translations were made by Willem Jordaens († 1372), Ruusbroec's confrere, though internal and external criteria raise suspicion about Jordaens as the translator of *Stone*. See Kees Schepers in Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 18–19. The translation of *Tabernacle* has not been discovered hitherto. For the edition of *Espousals*, see Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004); for the edition of *Rungs*, see *Trappen* (1911); for the edition of *Stone*, see *Steen* (1921).

8 Ampe (1975a), pp. 273, 242–45.

9 De Baere (1984a), pp. 178–79.

10 These treatises are: *Realm, Espousals, Stone, Tabernacle*, and *Little Book*.

11 Date of Ruusbroec's visit to Herne: Kienhorst & Kors (1998a), pp. 19–20; about the prologue of Brother Gerard of Herne, among others: de Vreese (1895) (edition of the prologue); Mertens (1995), pp. 66–69; Kienhorst & Kors (1998a), pp. 19–21; Warnar (2007), pp. 126–129. An English translation of the prologue may be found in this volume. See Appendix Three.

complete works. It was written in a monastery of regular canonesses, *Dal van Josaphat* ('Valley of Josaphat,' Bergen op Zoom (North-Brabant, NL)) and completed in 1480. From about 1470 until the beginning of the 16th century, the rectors of this monastery were supplied by Groenendaal,[12] which explains the availability of the Groenendaal volumes for the copy in Bergen op Zoom.

The history of a second manuscript with the complete works, MS D, is more complicated.[13] It was written in Holland and completed in 1461. In addition to the 11 authentic treatises by Ruusbroec, it contains *The Twelve Virtues* (*Vanden XII dogheden*) and some short texts concerning Ruusbroec and his work. There are strong arguments to accept that *The Twelve Virtues* was written by Godfried Wevel († 1396), regular canon at Groenendaal and first superior of the newly founded monastery of Eemstein near Dordrecht (Holland, NL).[14] One of the short texts just mentioned is entitled *The Epilogue of the Descendant* (*Nacomelinc*).[15] The author presents himself as 'a descendant of the brightly enlightened man, the Reverend John of Ruusbroec . . . and born to him after his death and received in his monastery by the whole convent' (*een nacomelinc des claer verlichts mans here Jans van Ruusbroec . . . ende in sinen cloester hem na sine doot gheboren ende ontfaen vanden ghemeenen convente*).[16] The Descendant presents himself as a spiritual child of Ruusbroec who was received by the whole community of Groenendaal. This may mean that he entered religious life in that community.[17] He possessed a manuscript containing the 11 authentic treatises and *The Twelve Virtues*. Though he was no longer a member of the community of Groenendaal when he wrote his epilogue, he visited the monastery to check the texts of his manuscript.[18] MS D is not a copy of the manuscript on which the Descendant worked. The copyist of MS D had only the epilogue of the Descendant at his disposal and had to look for copies of each of the treatises from different traditions. He ordered the works according to the Descendant's recommendations. Moreover, his way of correcting and commenting on the texts took into account the counsels given by the same Descendant.[19]

12 See Kienhorst & Kors (1998a), p. 38.

13 For more information about this manuscript, see Mertens (1995).

14 See *Werken* (1944–1948), vol. 4, p. XXXIII; Beckers (1981), col. 74.

15 Mertens (1995), p. 69.

16 De Vreese (1895), pp. 103–104.

17 See Mertens (1995), pp. 69–70, and Kienhorst & Kors (1998c), p. 224.

18 Kienhorst & Kors (1998c), pp. 224–225.

19 Ibid., p. 243.

A third manuscript, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1165–67 (siglum: F), contains the texts of the lost, second part of the Groenendaal codex. It is the last of the manuscripts intended to provide a collection of Ruusbroec's texts. It belonged to the Brethren of the Common Life in Brussels and was written *c*.1500.[20] In fact, we do not know whether this codex ever had a twin containing the texts of the first part of the Groenendaal MS.

Selective Collections

About ten manuscripts with partial collections dating from between the second quarter and the end of the 15th century are extant. At the beginning of this period, the Ruusbroec texts mix with other texts that are obviously related to Ruusbroec's oeuvre (e.g., sermons by Suso and Tauler, excerpts from Hadewijch, testimonies about Ruusbroec),[21] while at the end they are more specifically combined with texts of the Modern Devotion (Hendrik Herp) and, especially, of the chapter of Windesheim (Thomas a Kempis, Jan van Schoonhoven, Alijt Bake).[22] In approximately the third quarter of the 15th century, four manuscripts appeared that contain only Ruusbroec texts.[23] The tradition shows a peak in the second half of the 15th century, which fits the general image of Dutch manuscript production .[24]

In 1981, J.M. Willeumier-Schalij published an article in which she situated the reception of Ruusbroec's works within the late medieval era and described it in the light of the question whether Ruusbroec adapted his works to the changing needs of his audience and, if so, whether he succeeded.[25]

---

20 W. de Vreese dates the manuscript to the second half, even the last third, of the 15th century. See de Vreese (1900–1902), p. 44. J. Deschamps situates it *c*.1510. See *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 141 (nº 44).

21 These are the manuscripts The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 73 H 25 (siglum: W); Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2412–13 (siglum: H); and Scherpenheuvel-Zichem, Abdij van Averbode, Archief IV 101 (olim Bibliotheek 101 F 3; siglum: e).

22 These are the manuscripts Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. quart. 1083 (siglum: M4); London, British Library, MS Additional 11487 (siglum: Hh); Brussels, Koninklijk Bibliotheek, IV 37 (siglum: η); and Brussels, Stadsarchief, 2915 (siglum: ε).

23 These are the manuscripts Zwolle, Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst, coll. Emmanuelshuizen, 7 (siglum: n; contains *Realm, Little Book, Temptations*); Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ltk. 343 (siglum: L, burned in the fire of Leuven University Library in 1914; contained *Espousals, Mirror, Realm, Stone, Little Book, Faith*); Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Ltk. 344 (siglum: N; contains *Temptations, Little Book, Mirror* and *Faith*); and Brussels, Koninklijk Bibliotheek, 3775 (siglum: I; contains *Espousals, Mirror, Realm*).

24 Gumbert (1990), pp. 24–26.

25 Willeumier-Schalij (1981).

The 16th and 17th Centuries

Only five dated 16th-century manuscripts are extant.[26] From the 17th century, we know one manuscript[27] with extensive excerpts from *Espousals* copied from the 1624 print of this treatise (see below n. 28).

The Middle Dutch Print Tradition

Editions of Separate Treatises

The first edition of a Middle Dutch text by Ruusbroec, namely, *Espousals*, was published in Brussels by the Capuchin Gabriel van Antwerpen in 1624.[28] The book contains the complete text but the language was modernized. Which manuscript served as a basis for this edition is not known, but it appears to combine the two versions of *Espousals*.[29]

In 1848, Baron August von Arnswaldt (1798–1855) edited four treatises in his *Vier Schriften von Johann Rusbroek in niederdeutscher Sprache*.[30] As a basis for his edition, he used 15th-century manuscripts, of which at least two originate from the monastery of Nazareth in Geldern (now Germany, Niederrhein-

---

26 See *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 124–125. These are the manuscripts Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, II 296 (1510, siglum: g; contains *Tabernacle*); Deventer, Stadsarchief en Athenaeumbibliotheek, 101 D 12 (1517, siglum: De; contains *Temptations*); Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. quart. 1082 (1519, siglum: M3; contains *Mirror*); and Egmond-Binnen, Sint-Adelbertabdij, IV (1588, siglum: Eg; contains *Enclosures* and *Little Book*). *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981) names a sixth manuscript: Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2559–62 (siglum: Qq; contains excerpts from several of Ruusbroec's treatises), but the date mentioned (1578) is the year in which the monastery of Galilea (regular canonesses) in Ghent was given the manuscript by their rector Jan Stevens. The manuscript itself dates from the first decades of the 15th century. See Kienhorst & Kors (1998c), p. 231.

27 Brussels, Koninklijk Bibliotheek, 4487. See *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 125, and *Opera omnia*, 3, p. 98. *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981) mentions the catalogue number (2418) instead of the inventory number (4487).

28 *T'cieraet der gheestelycker bruyloft, Gemaeckt door den goddelijcken leeraer, ende seer uutnemenden schouwer Heer Jan Ruysbroeck, Canonick Regulier ende eerste Prioor van Groenendale. Int licht ghebrocht door eenen liefhebber Christi* [...] (Brussels, Jan van Meerbeeck, 1624). See Ampe (1975a), pp. 473–476; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 256–258 (n° 114).

29 *Opera omnia*, 3, pp. 119–120.

30 [August von Arnswaldt, ed.], *Vier Schriften von Johann Rusbroek in niederdeutscher Sprache. Mit einer Vorrede von C. Ullmann*, [Hannover 1848]. The treatises published are: *Espousals, Stone, Temptations*, and *Mirror*.

Westfalen), inhabited by regular canonesses.[31] Though the title may suggest otherwise, three of the four treatises are Middle Dutch, whereas *Espousals* was written in the language of Cologne, as von Arnswaldt himself writes.[32]

In 1911, D. Ph. Müller edited the text of *Rungs* according to the remaining first part of the Groenendaal codex, MS A. But the focus of his edition was on the Latin translation of this treatise made by Willem Jordaens († 1372), which Müller attributed to Geert Grote (1340–1384). In the same way, in 1921 Muller (now without an umlaut) edited *Stone* in the Latin translation attributed to Willem Jordaens and accompanied by the Middle Dutch text of MS F.

Complete Editions

The first complete edition of Ruusbroec's work in the original language (1858–1868) was made by the Leuven Professor and Canon Jan Baptist David (1801–1866).[33] He started with the most extensive treatise, *Tabernacle* (two volumes), and chose his model manuscript of the text very shrewdly: MS A, the remaining first part of the Groenendaal codex. The other treatises were edited in four volumes on the basis of MS D, the manuscript which contains the epilogue of the Descendant.[34] This was a less fortunate procedure, as the texts in this manuscript are a mixture of different traditions.

After this first complete edition, it would take a considerable time for a new edition to be published. The 550th anniversary of Ruusbroec's death was commemorated in 1931. On this occasion, the research group of the *Ruusbroecgenootschap* (Ruusbroec Institute, Antwerp), newly founded in 1925, was invited to publish a new complete edition, as the David edition, of which only 170 copies had been printed, was nearly untraceable.[35] As the motive for this publication was occasional, the members of the *Ruusbroecgenootschap* had little time to prepare their edition. Consequently, they made a provisional critical edition, limiting the manuscripts on which they based their texts and

31 He used Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS germ. fol. 1028 (siglum: M10) for *Espousals*, MS germ. quart. 1083 (siglum: M4) for *Stone*, MS germ. quart. 1084 (siglum: M5) for *Temptations* and MS M4 completed with MS germ. quart. 1082 (siglum: M3) for *Mirror*. MS M10 does not originate from the monastery of Nazareth in Geldern. According to von Arnswaldt and De Vreese MS M3 does not originate from the same monastery. See [von Arnswaldt, ed.], *Vier Schriften von Johann Rusbroek*, p. XXVI, and de Vreese (1900–1902), p. 115. But M. Costard argues that it was probably owned by Nazareth; see Costard (1992), pp. 198, 203–204, 218.

32 [von Arnswaldt, ed.], *Vier Schriften von Johann Rusbroek*, p. XV.

33 David (1858–1868). See the bibliography in this volume.

34 See Appendix Four in this volume.

35 See *Werken* (1944–1948), vol. 1, p. XVII.

reducing variants, paleographical commentaries, and references to sources to the minimum. Yet, in spite of this provisional character, this edition made a very insightful choice as to the base manuscripts, namely, using the preserved first part of the Groenendaal codex, MS A, for the three treatises that occur in that manuscript (*Tabernacle, Mirror*, and *Rungs*) and a copy of the lost, second part of the Groenendaal MS, i.e., MS F, for the remaining treatises. As a result, they presented a coherent text, though one must bear in mind that MS F is rather late (*c.*1500), which is evident from its language. Moreover, the copyists of this younger manuscript were not as accurate as their colleagues who copied the Groenendaal MS. As appears from the introduction to the edition, the editors themselves dreamed of a 'definitive' critical edition, which as yet they could not produce themselves. Their edition was published in 1932–1934 and was so successful that a second print appeared in 1944–1948.[36] In addition to some technical improvements (e.g., introduction of line numbers), the main difference from the first print was the replacement of the treatise *The Twelve Virtues*, which was not written by Ruusbroec, with the text of seven of his letters in the Latin translation by L. Surius O. Carth. (1st edition 1552), in some places completed with Middle Dutch passages, as far as these were available to the editors at the time.

The critical edition desired in the introduction of the above-mentioned edition began to appear in 1981 and was completed in 2006.[37] The Middle Dutch text is based on a critical study of all manuscripts. In addition to the Middle Dutch text, the edition contains a new American-English translation and the Latin translation by Surius. The edition of the Middle Dutch text is critically reconstructive. The text is accompanied by a variant apparatus containing the variant readings of a number of manuscripts selected according to the situation of the transmission for each of the texts, paleographic annotations, an indication of the Scripture citations and of other sources and parallel texts, and a text critical commentary.

36 Jan van Ruusbroec, *Werken*, 4 vols, 1st ed. (Tielt 1932–1934). In the 2nd ed. (Tielt 1944–1948), vol. 4 has partially different editors and different contents: vol. 4: J. Van Mierlo & L. Reypens (eds), *11. Vanden XIJ beghinen, 12. De overblijvende werken* (The remaining works, i.e., the *Letters* and some ascribed works).

37 Jan van Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*.

D. IOANNIS RVSBROCHII

SVMMI ATQVE SANCTISS. VIRI, QVEM
insignis quidam Theologus alterum Dionysium Areopagitam appellat,
OPERA OMNIA:

Nunc demùm post annos fermè ducentos è Brabantiæ Germanico idiomate reddita Latinè per F. Laurentium Surium, Carthusiæ Colonien alumnum.

OPERVM CATALOGVM VERSA PAGINA OFFENDES.



PSAL. XCIII.
Beatus homo quem tu erudieris Domine, & de lege tua docueris eum.

COLONIAE
Ex Officina Hæredum Ioannis Quentel, mense Martio, M. D. LII.
CVM Gratia & Priuilegio Imperiali ad Quinquennium.

ILLUSTRATION 3 *Cover Page of Surius' Latin Edition of Ruusbroec's Works* (1552)

The German Tradition

The Middle High German Tradition: Manuscripts and Prints

In approximately 1350, *Espousals* and *Stone* were sent to circles of devout people in the Upper Rhine Valley who referred to themselves as *Gottesfreunde* ('Friends of God'). They were translated into Upper German in Strasbourg.

In 1621, the above-mentioned translation of *Stone* was published by Daniel Sudermann (1550–1631) on the basis of two manuscripts from the Alsace.[38] In the title of the publication, *Stone* is ascribed to Tauler. In the same year, Sudermann published a compilation from the translation of *Espousals*.[39] Rulman Merswin (1307–1382), a converted merchant and money-changer in Strasbourg, has traditionally been considered the author of this compilation. But Ampe decisively objects to this attribution and opts for an unknown compiler.[40]

In 1968, W. Eichler edited the complete text of the Upper German translation of *Stone*. He mentioned four manuscripts and two prints containing a complete or partial text of this treatise.[41] One of the complete manuscripts is certainly 14th century.[42] In addition to the Strasbourg translation of *Stone*, another High German translation is testified in some manuscripts.[43]

In his edition of the Upper German translation of *Espousals* (1969), Eichler enumerated 18 manuscripts that contained the complete or partial text.[44] Some of these manuscripts were 14th century.[45]

---

38 *Ein edles Büchlein, Des von Gotte Hocherleuchten Doctor Johann Taulers* […] *Jetzo aber Publicirt auff anordnen D.S.* (s.l. 1621). See Ampe (1975a), pp. 447–448; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 247–248 (n° 108).

39 *Ain alt und werdes Büchlein. Von der Gnade Gottes, Genommen auß dem anfang des Hohen Liedts Salomonis. So nun vor mehr den Dritthalbhundert Jahren von Johan Rüsebruch, einem Hayligen Waldt-Priester in Brabandt* (*welcher bey Tauleri zeiten gelebt und selbigen in Geistlichen sachen viel underrichtet hatt*) *geschrieben. Auch zuvor nie Getruckt, und nuhn erstmahls an Tag gegeben worden. Durch D.S.* (s.l. 1621). See Ampe (1975a), pp. 446–447; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 248–250 (n° 109).

40 See Ampe (1975a), p. 294.

41 Eichler (1968a), pp. 9–10.

42 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. quart. 125 (siglum in Eichler, *Ruusbroec*, *Vanden blinckenden steen*: B).

43 Two witnesses of this translation are: Gießen, Universitätsbibliothek, 148 (siglum: Gi), and Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 148 (siglum: Tr). See *Opera omnia*, 10, p. 77.

44 Eichler (1969), pp. 8–29.

45 These manuscripts are: Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, Cod. 739, and Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Karlsruhe 1103.

In the same circles of the *Gottesfreunde, Temptations* and *Little Book* were also translated into Upper German. In addition to the complete translation of *Temptations*, an abridged version exists that was even more successful than the complete one. Both were often attributed to Tauler.[46]

In addition to the Upper German translations, a number of manuscripts with Ripuarian versions are also extant.[47]

Prints in New High German

Regarding these prints, we shall only mention editions that contain a complete text of one or more treatises and only up to the 19th century.

In 1701, a complete German translation was published, based on the Latin translation by Surius.[48] The translation was initiated by the Pietist and church historian Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), and the text was translated by Georg Johan Conradi (1679–1747), a Lutheran pastor who worked in Germany, Sweden, and Denmark and died as superintendent of Rendsburg in Northern Germany. A translation of *Stone* was published in 1722 by D.B.J.S., initials that are hitherto unidentified.[49] According to Ampe, this translation goes back to the Middle

46 Jan van Ruusbroec's *Opera omnia*, 10, mentions almost 20 manuscripts containing the abridged version (see *Opera omnia*, 10, pp. 237–238) and only two manuscripts with the (nearly) complete text: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS germ. oct. 352 (siglum: Ber), and Munich, Bayerische Staatbibliothek, Cod. germ. 99 (siglum: Mu) (ibid., pp. 235–236, 239). The MS Ber misses some six lines at the end of the text. For the complex history of *Temptations* in the German area, see Ampe (1975a), pp. 279–296. *Little Book* is only to be found in MS Mu (see supra in this note).

47 These manuscripts are: M10 (see note 31) with *Espousals* (see [von Arnswaldt, ed.], *Vier Schriften von Johann Rusbroek*, pp. xiv, xv–xviii, and Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 3, pp. 97, 99, 101); Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 8° 137 (siglum: Ko) with the nearly complete text of *Beguines* (see Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 7 (see note 37), pp. 123, 124 and 133); Cologne, Stadtarchiv, G.B. 8° 69 (siglum: Kö) with an excerpt of *Mirror* (see Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 8 (see note 37), pp. 138, 141, 159–160); Cologne, Stadtarchiv, G.B. 8° 53 (siglum: z) with the almost complete text of *Rungs* (see Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 9 (see note 37), pp. 61, 62, 67–68); and the almost complete text of *Faith* (see Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 10 (see note 37), pp. 359, 360, 361).

48 (G.J.C., trans.), *Des Ehrwürdigen Vaters D. Johannis Rusbrochii* […] *Schrifften* […] *ins teutsche treulichst übersetzet von G.J.C. und mit einer Vorrede heraussgegeben von Gottfried Arnold* (Offenbach am Main, Bonaventura de Launoy, 1701). See Ampe (1975a), pp. 494–498; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 250–252 (n° 110).

49 *Wunderschönes edles Büchlein von dem Zeugnus und Vollkommenheit der Kinder Gottes, oder der Seelen Adel* […], in D.B.J.S., *Theosophia Teutonica, der Seelen Adel-Spiegel* […] (Ulm, Elias Daniel Süsz, 1722), pp. 1–53. See Ampe (1975a), pp. 504–505; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 252 (n° 111).

German translation published by Daniel Sudermann in 1621. The article in the Exhibition Catalogue of 1981, however, calls this into question.[50] The 1722 edition was again the source for a translation of *Stone* in 1862 by the Lutheran pastor George-Charles Schmidt.[51]

The Low German Tradition in Manuscripts

Compared to its High German counterpart, this tradition is more modest. Still, *Temptations*, *Enclosures*, and *Mirror* are to be found in at least one manuscript, *Faith* and *Rungs* each in at least two manuscripts.[52]

The Middle English Tradition

Stone penetrated into the English language by its translation from the Latin translation attributed to Willem Jordaens, Ruusbroec's confrere. It was entitled *The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*.[53] Hitherto, only one manuscript

---

50 See Ampe (1975a), p. 505, and *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 252.

51 Together with excerpts from other works by Ruusbroec and Pseudo-Ruusbroec, this translation was published in Georg Carl Schmidt, ed., *Das Büchlein von der Vollkommenheit der Kinder Gottes und die Summa des ganzen geistlichen Lebens durch Dr. Johannes Ruysbroek. Nebst etlichen Zugaben herausgegeben von Georg Carl Schmidt* [. . .] (Neuruppin, Alfred Oehmigke, 1862). See Ampe (1975a), p. 555.

52 *Temptations* (complete text) in Hildesheim, Dombibliothek (olim: Beverninsche Bibliothek), 724b (siglum: Hi (see Jan van Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 10, pp. 236, 239, 240)); *Faith* (nearly complete text) in Kalamazoo, Institute of Cistercian Studies Library at Western Michigan University, 18 (siglum: Ka (see *Opera omnia*, 10, pp. 360, 361, 362)); and *Faith* (complete text) in Lübeck, Stadtbibliothek, MS theol. germ. 2° 11 (siglum: Lü (see *Opera omnia*, 8, p. 153. This MS was not yet known by me when *Opera omnia*, 10, was edited. The language shows Middle Low German and Middle Dutch characteristics)); *Enclosures* (partial text) in Rostock, Universitätsbibliothek, theol. 39 (siglum: Ro (see *Opera omnia*, 2, p. 71)); *Mirror* (complete text) in Lübeck, Stadtbibliothek, MS theol. germ. 2° 11 (siglum: Lü (see *Opera omnia*, 8, pp. 137, 153)); *Rungs* (nearly complete text) in Düsseldorf, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, B 119 (siglum: Du2 (see *Opera omnia*, 9, pp. 62, 63)); and *Rungs* (partial text) in Lübeck, Stadtbibliothek, MS theol. germ. 2° 13 (siglum: Lü1 (see *Opera omnia*, 9, pp. 62, 63)). For *Spieghel* (complete text), Düsseldorf, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, C 25 might be added. In *Opera omnia*, 8, p. 147, its language is considered to be Eastern Middle Dutch.

53 This is one of the titles of *Stone*. Cf. the title of the Latin translation attributed to Jordaens in Muller, ed., *Jan van Ruysbroeck, Van den blinckenden steen*: *Incipit libellus qui intitulatur calculus de perfectione filiorum dei*. It also occurs in Middle Dutch in MS H (see note 21): *Hier beghint een boec dat ghenoemt is vander volmaectheit der kijnder gods* [. . .].

containing this translation is known.[54] It contains an anthology of texts about contemplation, was owned by the Carthusians of Sheen, and also very probably was composed and written by a Carthusian.[55]

Excerpts from *Espousals* found their way into *The Chastising of God's Children*, a compilation of translations from Cassian's *Collationes patrum*, Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*, and other such works.[56] The excerpts from *Espousals* were translated into English from the Latin translation by Geert Grote.[57] *The Chastising* was printed in Westminster by Wynkyn de Worde *c.*1492–1494. This was the first time in history that a Ruusbroec text was published in print. Both *The Chastising* and *The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God* were edited by Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge.[58]

The Tradition in Romance Languages

We shall likewise limit our description in this section to the threshold of the 20th century. Until the 18th century, we have only translations in print which were all made on the basis of Surius' Latin translation. The Italian translation of Ruusbroec's treatise *Mirror* by Mambrino da Fabriano (1565) was the first publication of a complete treatise in a vernacular language.[59] *Espousals* was translated into French by the beginning of the 17th century by a Carthusian in Paris, generally identified as Richard Beaucousin (1561–1610), one of the forerunners of the mystical revival in 17th-century France.[60] The translation went through four issues of the same print between 1606 and 1619. In 1869, Ernest

54 The text is preserved in London, British Library, MS Additional 37790. For the Latin translation attributed to Jordaens, see *Steen* (1921).

55 See Cré (2006), pp. 17–59.

56 See *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 223–224 (n° 92). The compilation is preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 505.

57 Edition of the text: Grote, *Ornatus* (2000).

58 *Chastising* (1957).

59 Mambrino da Fabriano (trans.), *Specchio dell'eterna salute, di S. Giovanni Rusbrocchio, divino et eccellentissimo contemplatore. Tratto dal fonte della Teologia. Ridotto di Latina in lingua Italiana per M. Mambrino da Fabriano* (Venice, Michele Tramezzino, 1565). See Ampe (1975a), p. 430; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 253 (n° 112).

60 *L'ornement des nopces spirituelles. Composé par le divin Docteur et très excellent Contemplateur Jean Rusbroche. Traduict en François par un Religieux Chartreux de Paris. Avec la vie de l'autheur à la fin du livre* (Toulouse, Veuve de J. Colomiés et R. Colomiés, 1606). See Ampe (1975a), pp. 433–437; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 253–256 (n° 113).

Hello (1828–1885) published excerpts from several treatises based on Surius' translation.[61] Some decades later, however, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949) made the first French translation of *Espousals* based on the Middle Dutch text.[62] The Spanish translation of Ruusbroec's complete works (1696–1698) was the first series of his *Opera omnia* in a vernacular language.[63]

Conclusion

The Middle Dutch tradition of Ruusbroec's works began rather modestly in the second half of the 14th century with small manuscripts containing only one treatise. During the same period, however, the first projects to produce manuscripts with collections of his treatises began. By far the most important was the initiative of the Groenendaal monastery to collect the author's complete oeuvre. The second manuscript collecting some of the most important works was made by the Carthusian Gerard of Saintes, who knew Ruusbroec personally.

During the 15th century, the tendency to create manuscripts containing the *Opera omnia* continued. One of these manuscripts is a copy of the two codices of Groenendaal that together contained the complete works. It was written by a regular canoness in Bergen op Zoom (North-Brabant, NL). A second manuscript was written in Holland and also contained the Pseudo-Ruusbroec treatise *The Twelve Virtues*. A third manuscript is a copy of the second volume of the Groenendaal codices. It belonged to the Brethren of the Common Life in Brussels. In addition to these manuscripts intending to bring together complete collections, others make a choice, first combining some of Ruusbroec's works with those of other authors, then limiting themselves only to treatises by

61 Ernest Hello (introd. and trans.), *Rusbrock l'Admirable.* (*Oeuvres Choisies*). *Traduit par Ernest Hello* (Paris, Poussielgue Frères, 1869). See Ampe (1975a), pp. 556–559.

62 Maurice Maeterlinck (introd. and trans.), *L'Ornement des Noces Spirituelles, de Ruysbroeck l'Admirable. Traduit du flamand et accompagné d'une introduction par Maurice Maeterlinck* (Brussels, Paul Lacomplez, 1891). See Ampe (1975a), pp. 564–566.

63 Blàs Lopez (trans.), *Traduccion de las Obras del Iluminado Doctor, y Venerable Padre D. Juan Rusbroquio, Mystico Maestro, abrasado en el Amor divino, varon de contemplacion altissima en las cosas Celestiales, y Divinas, de que fue dotado con sabiduria, y Magisterio infuso para guiar en la vida del espiritu, y caminos del Divino Amor. Fueron traducidas estas Obras de la lengua Germanica en Latina, por el Venerable Padre Laurencio Surio Cartuxano; y aora de lengua Latina en la vulgar Castellana, con Adiciones, por el Padre Blàs Lopez de los Clerigos Menores*, 3 parts in 2 vols (Madrid, Melchor Alvarez, 1696–1698). See Ampe (1975a), p. 491; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 258 (n° 115).

Ruusbroec. From the 16th century onwards, new manuscripts with works by Ruusbroec become very rare.

The first Middle Dutch Ruusbroec text in print, *Espousals*, appeared in 1624. More than two centuries later (1848), August von Arnswaldt (1798–1855) edited four treatises, including three in Eastern Middle Dutch. The first complete edition was published by J.-B. David and appeared between 1858 and 1868. A second edition followed in 1932–1934, made by the Ruusbroec Institute. It was reprinted between 1944 and 1948. The last complete edition, again made by the Ruusbroec Institute, began in 1981 and was completed in 2006. In addition to the Middle Dutch text, it contains a modern English translation and the Latin translation by Surius.

The German tradition started with the Upper German translation of *Espousals* and *Stone c.*1350. Both were edited in the 20th century by Wolfgang Eichler, in 1969 and 1968, respectively. As early as 1621, however, Daniel Sudermann had edited *Stone* and excerpts from *Espousals* according to the Upper German translation. A complete German translation was published in 1701, based on the Latin translation by Surius. The same treatises, *Espousals* and *Stone*, were translated into Middle English, the former only in excerpts, the latter completely. In the field of the Romance languages, no manuscripts with translations from the Middle Dutch have been found. Until the end of the 19th century, Ruusbroec was only represented by prints that contain translations based on Surius' Latin translation.


T'CIERAET
der
GHEESTELYCKER
BRVYLOFT,
Gemaeckt door den goddelijcken leeraer, ende seer vvtnemenden schouwer Heer IAN RVYSBROECK, Canonick Regulier ende eerste Prioor van GROENENDALE.
Int licht ghebrocht door eenen liefhebber Christi.
Met het leuen ẽn Miraculen des Autheurs.
Salich is den mẽsch den vveloken ghy Heer onder-vvijst, ende hem van uvven vvet leert. Psal. 93
TOT BRVSSEL
By IAN van MEERBEECK, inde Putterye in S. ANNA. Anno 1624.
CONV. CAPUC. ANTVERPIEN.

ILLUSTRATION 4 *Cover Page of the First Dutch Edition of* The Spiritual Espousals (*1624*)

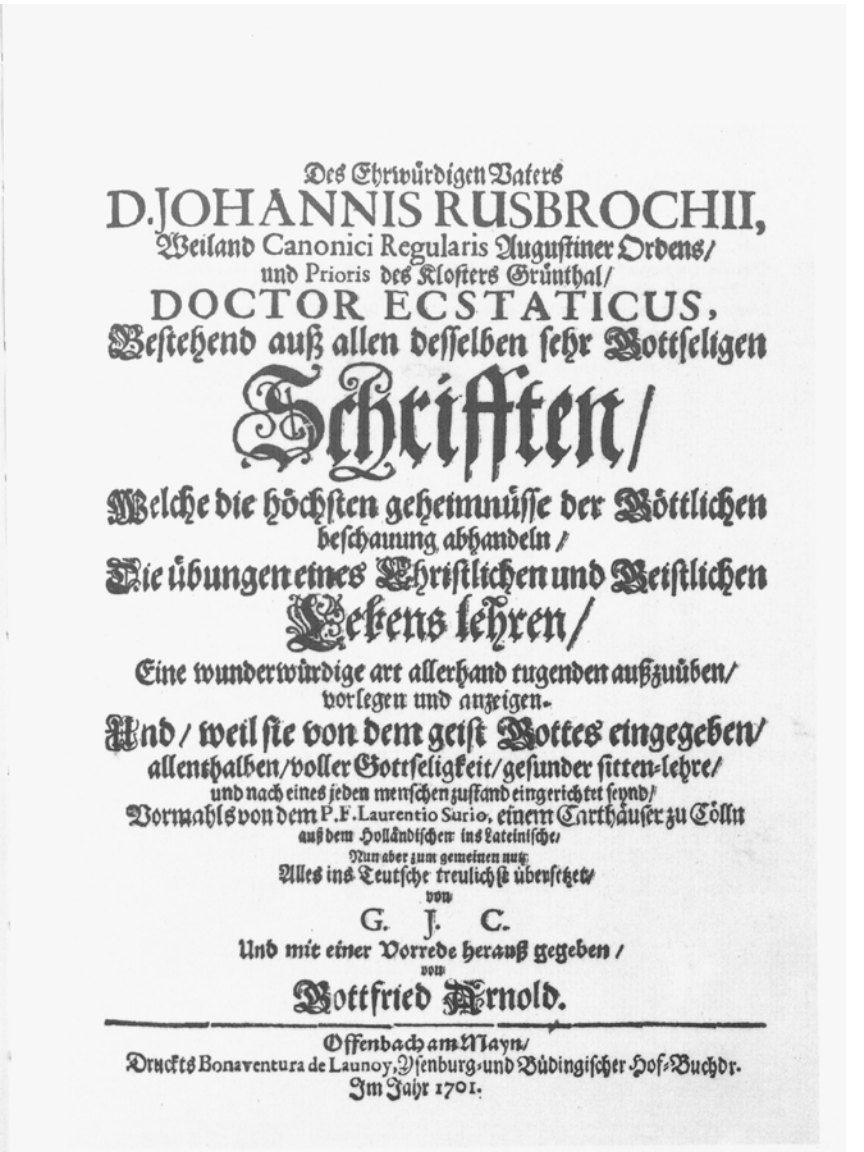

Des Ehrwürdigen Vaters
D. JOHANNIS RUSBROCHII,
Weiland Canonici Regularis Augustiner Ordens/
und Prioris des Klosters Grünthal/
DOCTOR ECSTATICUS,
Bestehend auß allen desselben sehr Gottseligen
Schrifften/
Welche die höchsten geheimnüsse der Göttlichen
beschauung abhandeln/
Die übungen eines Christlichen und Geistlichen
Lebens lehren/
Eine wunderwürdige art allerhand tugenden außzuüben/
vorlegen und anzeigen.
Und/ weil sie von dem geist Gottes eingegeben/
allenthalben/voller Gottseligkeit/gesunder sitten-lehre/
und nach eines jeden menschen zustand eingerichtet seynd/
Vormahls von dem P. F. Laurentio Surio, einem Carthäuser zu Cölln
auß dem Holländischen ins Lateinische/
Nun aber zum gemeinen nutz
Alles ins Teutsche treulichst übersetzet/
von
G. J. C.
Und mit einer Vorrede herauß gegeben/
von
Gottfried Arnold.
Offenbach am Mayn/
Druckts Bonaventura de Launoy, Ysenburg- und Büdingischer Hof-Buchdr.
Im Jahr 1701.

ILLUSTRATION 5 *Cover Page of the First German Edition of Ruusbroec's Works* (1701)

Ruusbroec the Author

Hilde Noë

John of Ruusbroec was a great mystic.* We may read this in the many publications about the 14th-century author. Each of his treatises is an attempt to describe and to explain a direct experience of God that transcends human reason. Therein, apparently, lies the primary appeal of his works; the reader seeks inspiration for deepening his/her inner life or seeks what is undoubtedly a reliable guide on the path to God. This fact makes Ruusbroec's work an interesting subject for theologians, who question what the Brabantine author says about God and whether his ideas are consonant with Christian teaching. Both groups, the seekers and the theologians, focus on the content of Ruusbroec's oeuvre. This was not only the case in the Middle Ages but also is often the case even now. And yet, unavoidably, the form of his works is also of some importance, both for the writer and for the reader. We may assume that an author makes every effort to reach his audience and to convey his ideas or experiences as well as possible. No message, however good, interesting or important it may be, reaches and captivates an audience if it is not formulated in a gripping way. The question is whether the fact that Ruusbroec's work has been heard and read for so many centuries is sufficient reason to consider his oeuvre to be literary. Is this mystic a great writer, a literary talent?

What is Literature?

Frank Willaert treated this question in an article on *The Spiritual Espousals*, the Brabantine mystic's second treatise, which is generally considered to be his masterpiece. He remarks that 'doubts about Ruusbroec's literary qualities [...] arise all too often in the secondary literature.'[1] This remark might be sufficient reason not to expend any time or energy on this subject, were it not that Willaert adds the following: 'The problem lies not with Ruusbroec, but with the usefulness of the concept *literature*.' He goes on to suggest that 'the concept *literature*' is not fixed and was even understood differently in the Middle Ages than it is today. Moreover, we must consider that nowadays, literature is equated with the written word. 'Ruusbroec's world was, however, still deeply

* I would like to thank Frank Willaert for his generous assistance in the preparation of this article. This article was translated from the Dutch by John Arblaster.

1 Willaert (1995), p. 63.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_06



ILLUSTRATION 1 *John of Ruusbroec as writer, miniature in the manuscript from Groenendaal, Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 19295–97, fol. 2r*

embedded in the oral tradition.'[2] Willaert's statements lead us to suspect that the modern researcher/reader has not been aware of medieval categories and conceptions for very long.

This is indeed the case. Generally, we might say that as readers became less familiar with medieval thought—simply because ideas about existence or about culture may change over the course of time—their understanding of the distinctiveness of literature from that period also decreased. This does not mean that no attention whatsoever was paid to the Middle Ages; rather, they were manipulated for personal interests, whether they were of a nationalistic, religious or romantic nature. In the 1980s, however, a transition occurred that created a space for the alterity of medieval culture.

Frits van Oostrom calls this history of alternating perspectives 'the melody of our age-old relationship with this heritage.' And he adds: 'It stands or falls with the experts in this field, both explorers and creators, as with all historical disciplines.' He sees the 'fanatical book hunters [...] and the treasure diggers [who] were invariably followed by publishers who made the medieval sources available in editions, and thereby made them readable.'[3] Concerning Ruusbroec's work, this pattern is evident at least from approximately 1800, for, by the end of the Middle Ages, when printing was invented, there was very little interest in the Brabantine mystic's oeuvre.[4] Since the mid-19th century, however, there has been renewed interest. Editions and translations have been published, occasionally provided with introductions in which editors formulate value judgments of the mystic's work. This was also the period of the first modern literary histories. All these publications are an excellent starting point for an overview of the development of literary appreciation of Ruusbroec as an author.[5]

Literary Value Judgments

The edition of all Ruusbroec's writings in Middle Dutch by J.B. David, professor at the University of Leuven, may be considered a milestone in this regard.

2 Ibid., pp. 63–64.

3 Van Oostrom (2006), p. 19.

4 It is possible that the condemnation by the Parisian theologian Gerson († 1429) was responsible for this. He doubted Ruusbroec's orthodoxy. For the circulation of Ruusbroec's work after the Middle Ages until *c.*1800, see *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 133–135 and 261–359. For text editions and studies in the 19th and the 20th centuries, see pp. 483–509.

5 In what follows, I rely in part on an earlier overview of the literary criticism concerning Ruusbroec's oeuvre. See Noë (1984), pp. 210–226.

David began work on his edition in 1858. In 1868, two years after his death, F.A. Snellaert completed the work. David's judgment on the literary quality of Ruusbroec's work is resoundingly positive. He finds that 'Ruusbroec may be placed at the head of our medieval prose writers, and that, from a literary perspective, his works may be considered the finest' due to his language's 'purity, [...] robustness and [...] richness of forms.'

The historian and professor at Leiden University W.J.A. Jonckbloet (1886) appears to be of the same opinion. But although he thinks Ruusbroec has a claim 'to the name of Dutch's best medieval prose writer,' he devotes only one paragraph to the work of the Brabantine mystic. He makes only one side note, namely, that 'the writer's inexhaustible imagination occasionally tempts him to false ingenuity.'[6] We now know, a century and a half later, that this sentence, as brief as it may be, has in the course of time grown into one of the greatest criticisms of Ruusbroec's literary qualities.

Thus, for example, the French-speaking Belgian author Maurice Maeterlinck, who translated the *Espousals* into French (1891), is wildly enthusiastic about the content of this treatise. As to its style, however, he leaves the reader under no illusions. A literary masterpiece? By no means. With requisite pathos he declares:

> I know few authors so incompetent as he; he occasionally strays into the strangest puerilities [...] Regarding his form, he displays no order whatsoever, no scholastic logic. He repeats himself often [...] He introduces an image and then forgets it. He even uses a certain number of unrealizable images; and this phenomenon, unusual in an oeuvre of sound doctrine, can only be explained either by his awkwardness or extraordinary haste [...] One should not expect a literary oeuvre.[7]

In an address delivered to the Royal Flemish Academy (1894), H. Claeys, a member of the Academy, proved to be in utter disagreement with this opinion.[8] Among others, he appealed to David to counter Maeterlinck's tirade. Furthermore, he argued that Maeterlinck could not possibly have any appreciation for Ruusbroec's style because he was a French-speaking Fleming. Claeys' arguments are hardly convincing. The reader is given the impression that

6 [J. David] (1858–1868), vol. 1, p. xxxvi. See also Jonckbloet (1881), p. 102.

7 Maeterlinck (1891), pp. i–iii, *passim*. In contrast to Hello (1912), p. xxv: 'Ruusbroec's speech is a virgin forest in which the traveller does not stray.'

8 Claeys (1894), pp. 202–204.

Claeys attempts at all costs to attribute great literary value to Ruusbroec's oeuvre.[9]

G. Kalff, professor at Leiden University, was the first historian/critic to present a thorough account. In his literary history (1906), he devotes no fewer than thirty pages to Ruusbroec, ten of which discuss his style.[10] His discussion is clear, well-ordered, well-argued, and illustrated with numerous examples. In contrast to Claeys, he does not shy away from negative appraisals. Furthermore, he attempts to adopt the perspective of a medieval person. Kalff discusses the copious use of *ende*, the prose rhyme and the alliteration, the use of parallelism and opposition, the comparisons, the symbolism, and the (broad) humor. Finally, without further comment, he associates Ruusbroec's oeuvre with that of the 13th-century mystic Hadewijch: 'Yes, Hadewych preceded him. But if Hadewych is the lark, [...] soaring upwards on the wings of her song and often losing herself in the blue, Ruusbroec is the nightingale, also a singer of *minne*, his melting song, his storm of sound resounding in the silence of the Sonian Forest.'[11] Kalff expresses his appreciation for both authors in these lyrical terms.[12] It is the comparison between these two mystics, however—not with respect to content but to form—that would ultimately develop to Ruusbroec's disadvantage.

Thus, a few years later, we see how J. Heyrman (1910) appears to value Ruusbroec's style in a brief study, but that 'it is far less finely fashioned artistic prose than the works of Sister Hadewijch.' Though his *Espousals* may be a positive highlight, even that treatise is characterized by 'naïve imagery,' images taken from nature or science at the time that lead Heyrman to assert: 'we can no longer take peace with such symbolized science, so popular at the time.' Nonetheless, he does appreciate the fact that Ruusbroec is occasionally inspired by his environment, producing little mocking sketches. And yet: 'His realism is sometimes rather rough [...] we must admit: Ruusbroec is not capable of keeping measure.' The structure of Ruusbroec's works does not escape unscathed either. According to Heyrman, it does not display a real plan, except the 'outer structure' which is formed by a scriptural passage. But this is detached from 'the inner connection to the line of thought itself.'[13]

---

9 The struggle for Flemish emancipation is clearly discernible here. By highlighting Flemish cultural heritage, an attempt was made to undermine French hegemony in Flanders in the period.

10 Kalff (1906), pp. 398–408.

11 Ibid., p. 408.

12 Kalff also extensively discusses Hadewijch's work. He calls her prose 'impressive' and remarks that her verse has 'the heartbeat of real poetry.' Ibid., pp. 166–167.

13 Heyrman (1910), resp. pp. 133, 138, 142, 146 and 137.

We do have an appreciative defense from the Flemish writer August Vermeylen (1941), who called Ruusbroec 'one of the greatest prose writers that ever lived,' but he also ultimately focused more on the content than the form.[14]

In her dissertation (1930), Mrs W.C.A. Schilling endeavors to provide an overview of Ruusbroec's stylistic skill by counting the words and syllables in his works.[15] Though her approach is clearly dated, the fact that she attempts to evaluate Ruusbroec's literary qualities in an objective manner deserves recognition. And yet here again we find that emotional arguments are often decisive. For example, she concludes that when the sentences become longer, the mystical content of the text increases.[16] In fact—opposite to Schilling's intention—this research also demonstrates how quickly a reader may be guided by personal presuppositions and fixed ideas that inhibit an open perspective.

The most striking exponent of this phenomenon is undoubtedly J. Van Mierlo, Flemish literary historian, in an argument from 1931. He is constantly undecided, creating considerable tension between content and form. Yes, Ruusbroec is an excellent author. But

> He wrote didactically; and he wrote popularly. And this is particularly striking when one reads him after Beatrice of Nazareth, and especially after Hadewijch. His greatness, his true accomplishment, lies in the teaching he presents; it lies less, at least not principally, in his art.[17]

Van Mierlo further elaborates this position as follows.

> He has little concern for the structure of his sentences [...] He does not develop his thoughts into a synthetic whole [...] The exposition sometimes proceeds through endless *ende*'s or *want*'s [...] Let us therefore simply admit that those *ende*'s and *want*'s [...] are to be explained by the fact that Ruusbroec knew little of the art of prose. Further, one seeks in vain in his work for those striking stylistic figures [...] Sentence structure is simply absent [...] He scatters his adjectives abundantly beside his nouns, heaping synonym upon synonym [...] All these adverbs, epithets and expansions, are merely patchwork [...] He uses stock expressions, hackneyed formulas, paired synonyms or alliterations: all the abundance of the popular style.[18]

14 Vermeylen (1941), p. 246.
15 Schilling (1930).
16 Ibid., e.g., pp. 62 and 103.
17 Van Mierlo (1931), p. 184.
18 Ibid., pp. 186–189.

Van Mierlo occasionally attempts to mitigate this damning judgment. For example: 'yet, in parts [...] we are struck by great and plentiful beauty.'[19] But he then undermines his mitigating words again:

> Ruusbroec's imagery is, however, less palatable, for which in the development of his teaching, he appealed for images to the astronomy, physics and geology of the time [...] We shall pass over this without comment [...] And yet, God be believed, he also uses images from elsewhere. Of Light and of the Sun [...] With the spirit of the age, the imagination has descended to everyday, yes even to domestic life [...] the popular imagination [...] it was unable to mark the border where beauty ends and poor taste begins.'[20]

Earlier, in response to Ruusbroec's imagery, he had already sighed: 'Hadewijch [...] how much greater and mightier!'[21]

Here we are confronted with Van Mierlo's great weakness, which is at once a strength: his passion for the work of Hadewijch. This 13th-century mystic presents her personal experiences directly, as it were, while Ruusbroec withholds the subjective aspect. Van Mierlo interprets this as a failure. It is of course impossible to contradict personal taste. To what extent, however, may we allow it to influence our literary judgment? What are Van Mierlo's criteria for beautiful form? The use of imagery? He praises Hadewijch's images because they are 'chivalrous,' while Ruusbroec's are only 'popular' or 'scientific.' He also rejects Ruusbroec's use of allegory, which was so common in that period. Is this a 20th-century prejudice? Van Mierlo vacillates:

> Does this mean that he has no literary value? By no means. And yet again: his style is the unaffected, didactic, popular style, and it must be understood in light of this special character. The faults and shortcomings are those of all unformed, uneducated and therefore unkempt popular styles [...]. The artistic shortcomings are not so irritating that they hinder our enjoyment and admiration of the excellent and delightful writing he offers us.[22]

Where Kalff successfully treats Ruusbroec's prose objectively, Van Mierlo makes commendable attempts to do the same but repeatedly lapses into pure

19 Ibid., p. 201.
20 Ibid., pp. 211, 220–221.
21 Ibid., p. 210.
22 Ibid., pp. 197–198.

emotion. His beauty ideal is romantic. The only thing he genuinely appears to appreciate, in contrast to Heyrman, is the structure of Ruusbroec's works. By repeatedly comparing Ruusbroec to Hadewijch, including with respect to the things he genuinely admires, Van Mierlo pans the former Brabantine author's literary qualities. His flood of criticism left a mark on Ruusbroec's work that remained for a considerable period. It did nothing to promote literary research into his oeuvre. And yet, we cannot deny that Van Mierlo's writings were very influential in the (re)valuation of Middle Dutch spiritual literature, even with respect to Ruusbroec.

We find the echo of the earlier critics, and especially of Van Mierlo, in Gerard Knuvelder (1970), a Dutch literary historian, though his judgment is more nuanced: 'Ruusbroec was not a stylist of prodigious talent, as Hadewijch was; [...] And yet, when the spirit moved him [...] the words strung together into beautiful phrases; and he found wonderful images.'[23] He also particularly praised the structure of Ruusbroec's works, as others had done. To Knuvelder, however, the literary aspect was of secondary importance.

The first real opposition to the critics was mounted by Bernhard Fraling (1967), a German professor of theology. He concurs with the ruling opinion that Ruusbroec's verses, scattered regularly throughout his texts, do not constitute the best part of his oeuvre. But as far as his prose is concerned, he considers Van Mierlo's judgment 'certainly rather one-sided.' He counters as follows:

> Although Ruusbroec was not possessed of genuine poetic talent in the same measure as Hadewijch, in our opinion his prose is not entirely devoid of poetry [...] The nature of his use of certain stylistic elements [...] cannot be reduced to pure didactics or be explained by it. Likewise for his visual language [...] Often, images and comparisons are scattered throughout Ruusbroec's exposition and positively involved in its development, giving his presentation color and vibrancy. They are certainly [...] valuable in themselves. Ruusbroec truly meditated on them—even if in part, he received them from the mystical tradition.

Fraling also indicates that many words still had an expressive power in Middle Dutch that has become vague in modern Dutch. And: 'Contemporary readers must often overcome a difficulty. The imagery is occasionally very strange.'[24] Though Van Mierlo's opinions emerge occasionally, Fraling primarily speaks with his own voice:

---

23 Knuvelder (1970), pp. 250–251.

24 Fraling (1967), pp. 31–32.

> Ruusbroec speaks the language of the people. His sentence structure is simple, and easily surveyable. He does not shy away from repetition, often resulting in an impression of monotony [...] And yet this monotony is not [...] a simple identical repetition [...] When one is led by the primary imaged sense of his terms, one rarely misunderstands.[25]

Changing Perspective

And so opinion on Ruusbroec's work changed. More space was created for nuance and his medieval particularity. Generally speaking, however, the assertions appear to be based more on impressions and feelings than on systematic research, and the distinction between content and form remains problematic.[26] Moreover, I cannot divest myself of the impression that perceptions of Ruusbroec's work were often linked to views of his person. Albert Ampe, associate of the Ruusbroec Institute in Antwerp, demonstrates how, soon after his death, a one-sided image of the mystic developed, an image that proved to be incredibly tenacious. Ampe frankly states 'that the traditional image of Ruusbroec was largely determined by Pomerius' *Vita Rusbrochii* [written *c.*1420—HN] and was thereafter passed down from generation to generation.'[27] In this 'generalized image of Ruusbroec,' the mystic was presented as a simple, uneducated person and especially as an author directly inspired by God. From this we might reasonably conclude that the first aspect, the alleged lack of education, led to the aforementioned repeated complaint about Ruusbroec's popular style. The second aspect is related to the content. In a qualitative sense, nothing can match divine inspiration. So-called poor style soon becomes relatively inconsequential in comparison. The person Ruusbroec was placed on an enormous pedestal. As a result, he was gradually detached from history, and interest in Ruusbroec as an author waned.

The Leiden researcher Geert Warnar has demonstrated this ingeniously. He juxtaposes two iconographic representations of the mystic. The first dates from 1624. It adorns the title page of the first printed edition of the *Espousals* in Dutch. I quote:

> The title page speaks volumes. Ruusbroec is portrayed sitting beneath a tree, holding a wax tablet containing the opening words of the *Espousals* in Latin: *Ecce sponsus venit*. This reference to Ruusbroec's literary work

25 Ibid., pp. 34–35.

26 See, e.g., Beuken (1976), pp. 38–42. Westerlinck (1981), pp. 488–492.

27 Ampe (1975a), p. 15.

> pales in comparison to the heavenly light shining down on the mystic, which is so intense that it has set fire to the branches above his head. The wax tablet—the pre-eminent attribute of the medieval author—is only of decorative value. Ruusbroec turns away from his writings to bask in the divine light of inspiration.[28]

The second is:

> The full-page miniature in the Groenendaal codex of Ruusbroec's works [...] There, too, the author, holding a wax tablet and a lead stylus, is seated beneath a tree in the company of the Holy Spirit, hovering above his head in the form of a white dove. This setting was often used in the Middle Ages to portray inspired authors. The wooded surroundings symbolized the author's seclusion as he sought to concentrate on his creative work, while the dove was a conventional symbol of divine inspiration.[29]

There is, however, an essential difference between the 1624 representation and the old miniature dating from *c.*1380, which is—it is important to realize—approximately 40 years older than Pomerius' biography. Due to the fact that on the latter picture 'a second scene [...] is shown: seated at his desk, the mystic fashioned his ideas into the constructs that would underpin treatises such as the *Espousals*,' Warnar concludes the following:

> When interpreted as a double portrait, the Groenendaal miniature becomes one of the most detailed medieval depictions of the two stages in creative writing: inspiration and technique [...] It is typical of the changing perception of Ruusbroec as an author that later depictions showed only the mystic beneath the tree, completely engrossed in his 'inward contemplation' (*inweyndiger contemplacien*). Just as the author seated at the lectern literally disappeared from the picture, the idea that there must have been more to Ruusbroec's carefully structured works than a stroll in the woods and what he received as inspiration there from the Holy Spirit (*tgene dat hem daer vanden heiligen geest waert gheinspireert*).[30]

---

28 Warnar (2007), p. 121.

29 Ibid., pp. 121–122. This manuscript was produced at Groenendaal, *c.*1380. See *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 137–138.

30 Ibid., p. 124. Cf. Axters (1953), p. 277: 'This brief confrontation of the text of Ruusbroec's works with those of a number of mystical authors [...] also indicates that Ruusbroec [...] did not only appeal to the Holy Spirit.'

The 1624 representation shows how, by omitting the second scene, content and form are separated; the literary technique was apparently unimportant. The miniature, in contrast, also brings the reality of the work itself to the fore; the craft of writing. The latter observation raises the question of the demands placed on an author and on textual form in the Middle Ages—a question that is absent from the opinions on Ruusbroec's oeuvre voiced in the 19th and first half of the 20th century. Warnar's observation is thus also characteristic of a completely new direction in literary historical research.

The Turn

This great revolution occurred via a detour. Influenced by the historians associated with the French journal *Annales*, history became more than a collection of facts; it became the history of mentalities.[31] These scientists attempted to enter into the life and thought of other times, especially the Middle Ages. Their approach opened so many new vistas that they did not remain limited to France. Moreover—again, necessarily so—it was felt in a related field, the history of literature. Limiting ourselves to the field of Middle Dutch spiritual literature, we see the first important changes in approximately 1980. Researchers such as Joris Reynaert and Frank Willaert approached the work of the 13th-century mystic Hadewijch in a completely new way, which produced surprising results.[32] For example, Reynaert's research demonstrated that the imagery in Hadewijch was imbedded in a long tradition, which she incorporated in her own particular way. Willaert convincingly demonstrated that her *Poems in Stanzas* are closely related to the courtly musical tradition but also transcend common patterns. It is apparent from both studies that this 13th-century mystic was very much a product of her time. Her particularity came to light precisely because the tradition she drew from was revealed.

This new approach became popular when the various forces were joined. In *De studie van de Middelnederlandse letterkunde: stand en toekomst*, we find the proceedings of a symposium in 1988. The introduction, written by Frits van Oostrom, formulates desires and conclusions. Of particular note is the desire for 'more scientific professional practice.' I quote a short passage here because it describes precisely what was at stake for so long in Ruusbroec research:

31 Among the well-known representatives of this new direction are Jacques Le Goff and Georges Duby. They considered the Middle Ages to be the cradle of Western civilization.

32 Reynaert (1981b); Willaert (1984).

> Middle Dutch studies have a great tradition, and the last—even the very first—generations provided us with tools (editions, literary histories, the Middle Dutch Dictionary, etc.) that people in the field still consult to great advantage every day. This also implies, however, that they are constantly confronted with the weaker sides of this research: it is often connected to literary and scientific notions that we consider subjective (because they are based on aesthetic, ethical, nationalistic, romantic, etc. preconceptions) and are consequently out of date.[33]

The desire to consider the Middle Dutch sources in their broader cultural context also repeatedly emerges. In addition, the participating researchers wanted to acquire insight into the function of the text. They concluded that medieval people apparently had a different perspective on the written word than we do nowadays. And why would we continue systematically to make such a sharp distinction between the spiritual and the secular when we know that in the Middle Ages, every aspect of life was permeated by the spiritual? These scientists wanted to approach the texts from the perspective of the time in which they were written, and no longer from a contemporary perspective.[34]

This symposium gave the research a completely new élan. Against the background of the preceding centuries, Thom Mertens sketches an image—as enlightening as it is concise—of this development, specifically with respect to spiritual literature. According to him, research in this field is constantly at risk because it is often one-sidedly focused on (the orthodoxy of) the content. 'Research into the teaching of the text must always guard against detaching passages and terms from their textual, literary and historical context. The danger of an a-historical approach is a constant threat.' This, of course, applies equally to a complete book or an entire oeuvre. He also indicates that the study of Middle Dutch spiritual literature is compelled to interdisciplinarity precisely because it is located 'in the field of three disciplines,' namely, historical theology, historical literary studies, and the doctrinal-theological approach. In this sense, it has in fact suited the new approach to medieval literature for a long time, but this advantage works to its disadvantage. 'For example, mystical texts were introduced to literary history thanks to theological interest, but it went no further. Truly literary research has hardly been conducted and that fact is not particularly noticeable because these authors are already subject to so much study.'[35]

---

33 Van Oostrom & Willaert (1989), in their introduction, pp. 8–9.

34 Ibid., pp. 17–18. See, in the same collection: van Oostrom (1989), especially p. 257; and Wackers (1989), especially pp. 225–226. Cf. Wackers (1996), p. 69.

35 Mertens (1991), pp. 134–136.

New Research, New Vision

Since the 1980s, there has been a great deal of activity, and there continues to be much palpable enthusiasm to the present day. Under the direction of Frits van Oostrom, thematic working groups were formed, resulting in a stream of publications.[36] Given such a substantial response, however, it is of the greatest importance always to return to the essential questions. Van Oostrom was aware of that: 'When it comes to formulating the core question of our field, I still feel very drawn to old, simple formulations such as: why does it say what it says?'[37] In my opinion, a second question must also be asked: why is it written in the way it is written? These questions perhaps open doors. More than anything, though, they are questions that are divested of preconceptions and free of contemporary criteria with respect to (valuable) literature.

Although researchers generally do not ask these questions explicitly, they are precisely what contemporary research into the literary qualities of John of Ruusbroec's oeuvre is based upon. Furthermore, we must also consider a happy coincidence. In that same period of renewal, a new edition of Ruusbroec's complete oeuvre was published.[38] The first two volumes appeared in 1981, the last in 2006. In this edition, a carefully considered Middle Dutch text is accompanied by 16th-century Latin and a modern English translation. The commentaries and explanations are bilingual: Dutch and English. As a result, Ruusbroec's work has become internationally accessible. In addition, a glossary (with references) has also been included. His entire vocabulary can thus be consulted. All in all, this provides a treasure of research material. Nonetheless, criticisms were occasionally voiced of, among other things, the introductions to the various works. Indeed, attention is again focused on 'the mystic' John of Ruusbroec and not on 'the author,' re-affirming what was repeatedly concluded above. From another perspective, however, this is not the case. The authors of the introductions no longer attempt to seat Ruusbroec on an unreachable throne. They merely explain what the treatise in question contains. For this reason, I agree with Geert Warnar that such a severe judgment is unfounded.[39] The editors-in-chief, the Ruusbroec Institute, are not, strictly speaking, a group of literary historians. Moreover, we must not forget that reading Ruusbroec does not come very easily to the modern reader, who has in many cases become estranged from theological discourse. Such a reader may welcome some guidance concerning the doctrine of the faith.

---

36 See the series *Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen*.

37 Van Oostrom (1995b), p. 18.

38 Jan van Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia* (1981–2006).

39 Cf. the position of Ruh (1999b), pp. 29–30. See also Warnar (2002b).

One such introductory author is Paul Mommaers. At a conference organized in Leuven in May 1981 to celebrate the sixth centenary of John of Ruusbroec's death, he presented a paper that moved me deeply—I was still a student at the time. In his 'Une phrase clef des noces spirituelles,' he demonstrated how in one single sentence of his description of the highpoint of the interior life, this 14th-century mystic both refers back to the preceding active life and refers forward to the contemplative life that follows.[40] I quote: 'God comes without cease within us, with intermediary and without intermediary, and demands of us enjoyment and activity, and that the one should not be hindered by the other, but rather always be fortified' (*Espousals* Eb1932–b1934).[41] This sentence is interesting not only for its content. Let us examine—as this is our present purpose—how the author Ruusbroec formulates his ideas. He uses oppositions ('with intermediary' as opposed to 'without intermediary'; 'enjoyment' as opposed to 'activity'), which he indicates in a chiasmus. 'With intermediary' belongs with 'activity'; 'without intermediary' with 'enjoyment.' While Mommaers seeks to uncover what Ruusbroec writes and to understand him, he also discovers how the mystic writes: 'each of the elements that constitute this sentence is operative in every part of the work.'[42] Mommaers' approach is text-immanent, which means that he explains the text using the text itself. Mommaers' analysis reveals Ruusbroec to be an extraordinarily clear writer who knew precisely how to describe his experiences accurately and make them understandable.

In a certain sense, Paul Mommaers is a researcher of two worlds: the spiritual-religious and the linguistic. Gripped as he is by the interior world that Ruusbroec unfolds (as do authors such as Hadewijch), his primary objective is to understand. He allows himself to be carried along by the text and then attempts to understand how it is that he is drawn, as it were, into the text. That is one of the reasons that he began to explore the language of the mystics. He questions whether the overwhelming experience of the immediate encounter with the Other can be made expressible and how.[43] This question involves a field of tension that is also particularly interesting from a literary perspective, which leads us automatically, as it were, to more recent research into

40 Mommaers (1984a). For the way in which Ruusbroec structures spiritual growth, see elsewhere in this book.

41 *God comt zonder onderlaet in ons met middele ende sonder middel, ende eyschet ons ghebruken ende werken, ende dat dat een vanden anderen onghehindert blive, maer altoes ghesterket werde* (*Espousals* b2244–2247). I diverge here from Mommaers; he first quotes a French translation and then the Middle Dutch text of the 1944–1948 Ruusbroec edition.

42 Mommaers (1984a), p. 101.

43 Mommaers (1981c); Mommaers & Willaert (1988).

Ruusbroec's literary qualities. The time of general, often weakly founded statements is now over. This research provides a thorough treatment of various aspects of the literary craft, and this, in turn, gives us insight into the very particular (world)view of the Middle Ages. It is thus appropriate that we devote extensive attention to this renewal.

Results

One of the first examples is an article written by Paul Wackers, 'De kosmos bij Ruusbroec, astrologie en allegorie.'[44] He focuses on the third part of Ruusbroec's last book, *The Twelve Beguines*, 'in which the cosmos is the starting point of a number of reflections.' The authors of the introductions to the old Ruusbroec edition considered this relatively long passage to be 'Remarkable for the truly medieval spirit it evinces [...] the symbolic mentality of medieval people, in which time and eternity, heaven and earth, past, present and future are conjoined as in one single point.' And they conclude: '[It] often remains a mystery to us.'[45] This riddle appears, however, to be solvable. Wackers examines John of Ruusbroec's text against the background of scientific conceptions of the cosmos at the time. According to medieval people, it comprised two parts: heaven and earth. 'The earth is the realm of the [four—HN] elements. Change occurs there and it is dominated by decay and death; that is the realm of humans. In heaven, God's order reigns immutably, which may be seen in the construction of heaven and the movements of the celestial bodies.'[46] 'Structure' presupposes stratification—layers that are ordered hierarchically, i.e., the higher, the more perfect. This increasing perfection occurs through mediation, which is evident from the three heavens.[47] The lowest is the firmament, the middle heaven is called the crystal heaven, and the highest is the empyrean, which is the abode of God and the angels. The middle heaven mediates between the highest and the lowest. In the text in question, Ruusbroec focuses on the planets and the stars, which are part of the lowest heaven. The former are located closer to the earth, while the latter are near the outer edge. The planetary movements influence everything that lives on earth, including human beings.

44 Wackers (1989b), pp. 55–73. Vekeman (1981) is comparable, but less in-depth. For the passage in question, see *Beguines* E2b:1–2404; 2b:1–2592.

45 Wackers (1989b), pp. 55–56. For the introduction to the old edition, see Jan van Ruusbroec, *Werken* (1944–1948), vol. 4, p. xxx.

46 Wackers (1989b), p. 56.

47 The four elements of the earth are also ordered hierarchically: the lowest is earth, followed by water, air, and, finally, fire.

They are, moreover, capable of drawing the human higher up. Because the planets are different, their influence generates various types of people, though Ruusbroec emphasizes that free will is always ultimately decisive. These types are described by astrology, which medieval people considered to be a science like any other. According to Ruusbroec, each of these types has specific characteristics and possibilities with respect to spiritual development. Wackers remarks that the author's argument is guided 'by the nature of the cosmos.' He is not concerned with expounding his 'teaching,' no, he reads from the 'book written by God's finger,' namely, reality. Whether regarding concrete objects or historical events, this has deeper layers of meaning. It tells humans about their Creator and shows them how to live on their way to Him, their ultimate destination. This manner of interpreting reality is referred to as allegorization, and nowadays it is primarily a literary technique. That was no different for medieval people. But at the same time, it also meant much more: allegory drew one closer to God. They were completely immersed in it.[48] That is precisely what we see in Ruusbroec. According to Wackers, however, Ruusbroec went further than the mere interpretation of an existing model. 'This part of the *Twelve Beguines* is—certainly in Middle Dutch and, as far as I can see, in the whole of medieval literature—the only text that couples allegorical and astrological explanations of the cosmos. The individual ingredients are not unusual [...] the mixture is unique.' Wackers indicates that Ruusbroec also uses this technique in other treatises. This has certain consequences for research. 'Reality and its allegorical meaning must thus be implicated in the interpretation of Ruusbroec's work.'[49] In other words, the form is not only pure form but also a means of grasping the content.

Hadewijch Ceulemans illustrates Wackers' suggestion in an interesting study on Ruusbroec's explanation of Aaron's breastplate, which the mystic describes in an approximately 500-line passage in the *Tabernacle*, his longest work.[50] Ruusbroec presents Aaron, the High Priest and brother of Moses. When performing his priestly function, he wears a breastplate or *rationale* which, according to the description in the Old Testament, is decorated with 12 different precious stones. They are arranged in three neatly aligned columns of four stones each. By explaining each stone allegorically, Ruusbroec summarizes

48 See also de Baere (1991), p. 16: 'Although the passages on this level [= *artes* literature—HN] may sometimes be several pages long, they were never written for their own sake. They always point forward toward their real meaning, therein lies their full sense. The texts about nature (*natuere*) and creatures (*creatueren*) do not satisfy the mind with informative things, they make it hungrily look forward to that which is truly worth knowing.'

49 Wackers (1989b), p. 72.

50 *Tabernacle* E5:1011–1513; 5:1066–1596; Ceulemans (2006).

his entire conception of the inner development of the human person.[51] Strictly speaking, an allegory has four layers of meaning. The foundation is the *historia*, the literal reality that might be a human being, a thing or an event (in the Bible). The second layer, also known as *figura* or typology, reveals the figurative meaning of the first and is determined by God. It is polysemic, depending on the number of characteristics the *historia* has. The third layer contains the moral or tropological meaning. It demonstrates that the relationship between the *historia* and *figura* has necessary consequences for human behavior. Finally, the fourth layer of meaning, the analogical, refers to eternal life.

It is impossible to do justice to Ceulemans' meticulous analysis here. I will highlight the main themes in order to explain some aspects of Ruusbroec's method.

This 14th-century writer-mystic names each stone individually as well as the name of one of the sons of the Patriarch Jacob carved into each stone. Each of these names refers to one of the apostles, based on the etymology of the two names or on the lifestyles of the two men. The apostle is then linked to one of the 12 articles of faith, an association consonant with the tradition of pastoral care at that time. The apostle and article of faith then recall the precious stone. Its characteristics are explained morally, elucidating the content of the corresponding article of faith. These moral explanations are then connected to the etymology of the corresponding apostle's name.

Returning to the construction of an allegory, we may note that this text contains not only a double *historia* (the stone and the son of Jacob) but also a double *figura* (the article of faith and the apostle). On the basis of each stone's characteristics, Ruusbroec demonstrates the moral implications that emerge in the content of the corresponding article of faith and its manifestation by the apostle. This reveals the moral and mystical meaning. According to Ceulemans, Ruusbroec's combination of the stone allegory with a numerical allegory (the number 12) in order to construct a relationship between the precious stones of the *rationale* and the articles of faith, is unique.[52] She concludes, as Wackers did, that Ruusbroec uses his allegorical material freely, while also applying an orderly and traditional method.

To the modern reader, however, it is dizzying, and some effort is required to follow the argument, until the reader discovers that Ruusbroec continually draws one's attention back to the 12 stones upon which each step is based. Ceulemans indicates that the great importance of this fact is that it reveals

51 It is, in fact, an allegory within the overarching allegory of the tabernacle, the Jewish Holy of Holies.

52 Ceulemans (2006), p. 134.

something of medieval memorization techniques and the importance of the *memoria*. In addition to the memories of his or her own experiences, the medieval reader would undoubtedly have had a store of (biblical) knowledge in his or her memory. Considering that readers in that time would probably have been able to recall the breastplate and the biblical texts almost effortlessly, they would have been capable of following Ruusbroec's line of thought. Moreover, thanks to all the information stored in their memory, they would have been able to make connections and thus acquire more knowledge (of the faith). They saw the course of the road to God and learned how to improve their lives morally. Indeed, to the medieval mind, acquiring a deeper understanding of the world and of God's intentions would make one more noble. Ceulemans' analysis demonstrates the extent to which Ruusbroec mastered the art of writing as it was conceived in his period. He was by no means an unlettered man. On the contrary, he possessed the requisite knowledge, and this point is by no means undermined by the fact that in all likelihood he also had the opportunity to consult books during the writing process.

The investigations by Wackers and Ceulemans illustrate that it is worthwhile to read the text as it is and to analyze it carefully. Medieval conceptions of authorship emerge automatically, as it were, casting a completely different light on the author Ruusbroec than was the case previously. As a reader—especially of Ceulemans—I felt like I was on an adventure, as though every step in the analysis opened a new door revealing new knowledge which, in turn, led to a new door. This was undoubtedly the precise intention of Ruusbroec's method.

The same is true of a fine article by Frank Willaert about the three little books in *The Seven Enclosures*.[53] In contrast to the *Beguines* and the *Tabernacle*, where we can only guess at the author's intended audience, there is no doubt as to the identity of the addressee of the *Enclosures*.[54] The treatise was written for a nun, Margarete van Meerbeke, a fact that Ruusbroec incorporates in the design of the work, considering that the daily life of an enclosed nun is the leitmotif for his exposition on spiritual development. His reflections on the three little books are to be found at the end of the text, where he discusses evening prayer. He urges Margarete to practice self-examination:

> Every evening as you come before your bed, you should read through three little books, if you have the opportunity, and should always carry them with you. The first little book is old, ugly and dirty, written in black

53 Willaert (2004), pp. 99–128.

54 Ceulemans suggests that the *Tabernacle* was written for priests because it was the Jewish place of worship.

> ink. The second little book is white and lovely, written in red blood. The third is blue and green, written entirely in fine gold. (*Enclosures* E899–903)[55]

In this way, the mystic presents a clear structure of what is to follow. In his description and explanation of the little books, he makes use of older representations. From as early as the Patristic period, the conscience was represented by a little book, an image drawn from the Book of the Apocalypse. Reading the little book forces the person to turn inward and to acknowledge his or her sins. This happens in the first little book. The willingness to be confronted with one's own sinfulness (the black letters) enables the person to come closer to God. The little white book with red letters reminds one of the great exemplar Christ. This is also a traditional image.[56] Finally, the third little book, which is blue and green with golden lettering, also contains traditional elements: the blue of the sky, the brilliant green of knowledge and wisdom, and the gold that symbolizes inward desire, cleaving to God with love, and being united with Him. Willaert refers to parallels with various other works from Ruusbroec's period. But the closest textual similarity to the fragment in the *Enclosures* is the following:

> the devotional tale *Un petit conte des .iij. Chevaliers et des .iij. Livres* [...] This text combines book and letter symbolism. Three young knights have forsaken the vanity of the world and entered a monastery. When two of them feel tempted to abandon monastic life, the third teaches them that, night and day, they should read and study three books, the first of which is the book of conscience (*livre de conscience*), the second the book of understanding (*livre de science*), and the third the book of wisdom (*livre de sapience*).[57]

---

55 *Altoes des avons alse gi vore u bedde comt, eest dat gijs stade hebt, soe suldi overlesen .iij. buecskene, ende die suldi altoes met u dragen. Dat ierste buecsken es out, leeleec ende onreyne, met swerten atremente gescreven. Dat ander buecsken es wit ende gratioes, met roeden bloede gescreven. Dat derde es blau ende groene, ende al bescreven met finen goude.* (*Enclosures* 949–954).

56 We find the same colors in the little stone that is given to the perfect person in *The Sparkling Stone*. See footnote 75 below.

57 Willaert (2004), pp. 123–124. Moreover, the three little books are to be read in different positions: lying, kneeling, and standing. It is not impossible that Ruusbroec alludes here to one of Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs. In the sermon, the feet of the beloved are kissed lying down, the hands are kissed in an in-between position (kneeling?), after which the beloved is beheld directly (standing?). Willaert also refers to

Not only does Ruusbroec draw on tradition; he also applies the same method he used in the *Beguines* and the *Tabernacle*. In these texts, he presents the concrete reality of the cosmos and the concrete object of the breastplate. Here, they are three little books of which he highlights a number of characteristics, no more and no less than he requires. He then uses these to explain his spiritual reflections. In doing so, he occasionally digresses, for example when he discusses the various modes of prayer, but the reader does not get lost. It suffices to keep the image of that concrete reality in mind and to follow Ruusbroec's explanation of its spiritual meaning. Here too, he reserves a role for the *memoria*, both in visualizing a concrete little book and in his appeal to tradition.

The Imagery of *The Realm of Lovers* Unraveled

The contributions of Wackers, Ceulemans, and Willaert concern fragments of longer treatises. The fact that it is also possible to analyze the imagery of a whole treatise was, however, demonstrated by my Master's thesis, an investigation of the metaphors of light in Ruusbroec's *Espousals*. The advantage of this treatise is that it contains a complete description of the human person's mystical development. In my research, I discovered that there is a clear structure in the images of light—a conical spiral leading to a single point—that runs parallel to the rational argument.[58] I then discovered an interaction between the various forms of light and other metaphors, such as images of water. My curiosity was stirred and eventually led to an extensive examination of the imagery in the Brabantine mystic's first treatise, *The Realm of Lovers*. In the treatise, he also describes and explains the entire inner development of the human person who consciously turns to God. This research clearly demonstrated yet again the well-considered nature of Ruusbroec's writings.

I based my research on a simple definition of imagery, namely, the analogy between two realities in which the first (the image or the *comparant*) refers to a second (the thing which is compared or the *comparé*). For example: Christ is the sun. Here, the 'sun' is the *comparant* and 'Christ' is the *comparé*.[59] Within the complete collection of images in the *Realm*, we may discern six areas of

Bernard in connection with the little book. Willaert (2004), p. 106. See *Patrologia Latina* 183, sermon 3–8.

58 Noë (1981).

59 With regard to this definition of imagery, see Noë (2001), pp. 8–13. All the images (*c.*3,600) are listed in an index and noted according to a fixed formula with the location, *comparant, comparé*, a contextualizing passage, and a number that refers to the set to which the image belongs. Due to its size, this index is not published in the book. It may be

images or paradigms that recur throughout the work. They are the cosmos, the angels, feudalism, light, water, and space. The last three groups appear to occur in all Ruusbroec's treatises, which, incidentally does not necessarily imply that they can be disconnected from the first three (cosmos, angels, and feudalism). The first three do, however, have a specific connection to the biblical quote with which the mystic begins the treatise: 'The Lord led the just back along the right ways and showed him the realm of God' (*Realm* E1–2).[60] In the first instance, this forms the leitmotif of his rational argument. To this end, he divides the quote into five parts, each of which determines the theme of one passage.[61] In the first part, 'the Lord,' Ruusbroec describes God as a mighty, wise, and good feudal lord, the creator of heaven and earth and of its inhabitants. He briefly describes how some of the angels turned away from God and how, subsequently, humanity was given the opportunity to fill the space left in heaven based on its merits. Against this background, he discusses the second part, 'led back,' in which he calls to mind the history of humanity and specifically its fall and redemption. In the third part, 'the just,' he provides a succinct treatment of the redeemed person's possibilities. In the fourth part, 'along the right ways,' he elaborates the content of the third part in detail. Herein lies the core of the treatise, both in terms of its content and length.[62] Ruusbroec describes and explains the paths that lead the human person back to God. He distinguishes three: the sensory, the natural, and the supernatural. The latter is by far the most extensive. The human person is able to travel this path thanks to grace in the form of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, in which Ruusbroec accords a lower and a higher rank to strength and counsel. The person who walks the third path integrates the first and the second within it. Finally, in the fifth part, 'and showed him the realm of God,' the human person reaps the fruits of his return to God in the form of five insights. Here it appears that in the mystical experience, the state of the blessed after the end of time and of creation in its original state are joined together. The biblical quote that opens the *Realm* is thus fulfilled, though this by no means implies the end of the dynamism that characterizes mystical life.

Ruusbroec's imagery follows this development; discursive and metaphorical structure interact with each other. In the first three parts, Ruusbroec roughly

---

consulted on the website of the Ruusbroec Institute, https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/onderzoeksgroep/ruus/publicaties/documenten/

60 *Die heere hevet weder leidet den gherechten die gherechte weeghe ende hevet hem ghetoent dat rike Gods* (*Realm* 1–2). This is a quote from Wis. 10:10.

61 This form of introduction is used in sermons.

62 This concerns *Realm* E148–2376; 168–2483. *Realm* numbers a total of E2639; 2760 lines.

sketches the contours of each paradigm. These are all elaborated upon in the fourth part. The metaphors in the fifth part are connected to (the zenith of) the fourth part but also refer back to the very beginning. Thus there is a circular movement of departure and return, but at the same time also an ascending line. This, in fact, is the essence of the *Realm*: creation, which has been removed from its creator through the fall of both the angels and humanity, is led back to its origin thanks to humanity itself. Indeed, humans possess both a body and a soul through which, in themselves, they connect heaven and earth, on the condition that they turn back to God and travel the divine path, as a result of which their natural capacities are transformed. They understand the sensory reality as 'a vestige of God, and a rough likeness of God' (*Realm* E154; *een voetspore gods ende een grof ghelikenisse gods*, *Realm* 174–175). Both the discursive structure and development of the imagery as well as the various image models run parallel. As a result, within the vertical structure, a horizontal stratification emerges in which the various kinds of metaphors that are of the same level are connected. For example, the first gift, the 'loving fear of our lord,' corresponds to the first element of the cosmos, the earth, the first choir of angels, the first step of feudal homage, and the lowest position at court (the messenger). The second gift, benevolence, corresponds to the element water and refers to the second choir of angels, to the second step of feudal homage, namely, the readiness to grant counsel and acts, and, finally, to the function of highest messenger. These horizontal layers may easily be distinguished, but not separated. This is very clear in the paradigm of Light, Water, and Space in which Ruusbroec both differentiates each step in the mystical ascent very precisely and creates an ongoing movement by adding stipulations, adjectives, or prefixes to the basic image. Ruusbroec uses these paradigms not to explain but to describe inner growth, in contrast to the paradigms of the Cosmos, the Angels, and Feudalism. I will discuss the latter group at more length in order to illustrate the conclusions of my research.

The image of the Cosmos is announced in the first part.[63] Indeed, that is where Ruusbroec mentions Creation. The image is clear, but at this point, as readers, we do not yet know that it will later function as an image for both God Himself and the microcosm of the human being. In the extensive fourth part, the human person comes one step closer to God with every gift of the Holy Spirit. Each time, the person is compared to one of the seven layers of the cosmos. Those who possess the first gift, the 'loving fear of God,' are, as we saw previously, like the element earth. The person progresses in this way until he/she acquires the seventh gift, 'wisdom.' Those who have received this gift are

63 Preliminary research for this chapter may be found in Noë (1989), pp. 41–53.

like the third heaven in which God, the angels, and the saints dwell. These hierarchically arranged layers encompass one another 'as in a sphere' (*Realm* E191–192; *alse in eenre rontheyt*, *Realm* 214–215). This is of great importance because it indicates that the higher levels do not abolish the lower levels. Each step remains current. The person adorned with all seven gifts lives, as it were, the entire order of the macrocosm. In this way, the *comparant* cosmos is fulfilled in the *comparé*, which is the spiritually mature person. This is true *a fortiori* in the fifth part, in which Ruusbroec describes the end of time. The transformation of the macrocosm which then occurs can be discerned in the microcosm of the person. Although it is actually the reverse, since the macrocosm can only be transformed because the person has experienced complete growth towards God.

The angels live in the top half of the cosmos, in the highest heaven. They too are announced in the first part of the *Realm*. The choirs of angels are ordered in a strict hierarchy in which Ruusbroec sees a comprehensive analogy of the distinct levels of the human person's spiritual development. The redeemed person who responds to God's mercy can fill the empty places in heaven created by the fall of the rebellious angels. That is why the good angels in heaven and humans on earth are necessarily related to one another. Their objective is the same: to serve, praise, and love God, by which they are transformed. The angels have already achieved this objective. But, despite the fact that Christ has redeemed all people, every person must regain his or her place with God. Because the angels know the way, they may serve as a mirror for humanity. They accompany one another throughout the journey. For Ruusbroec, however, the angels are not so much guides as 'companions' (*ghesellen*). In the Middle Ages, this term denoted social equality.[64] Strikingly, this epithet is no longer used in the contemplative life, in which Ruusbroec refers only to mutual recognition. This level involves only God and the human person; there is no longer any mediation. The circularity of the cosmos guarantees that every level is maintained, and this paradigm contains a surprising paradox that fundamentally concerns the same thing: the highest choir, the Seraphim, and the people who belong to this choir must 'turn downward.' The confrontation with daily affairs and with other people is, apparently, the way to avoid the path of pride, taken by the fallen angels or the first human.

With Feudalism, we move to the most important inhabitants of the lowest part of the cosmos: human beings. This paradigm has a slightly different char-

64 Cf. Rombouts, De Paepe & de Haan (1976), p. 22.

acter than the Cosmos and the Angels.[65] First, it is divided across the other paradigms throughout the work, whereas the Cosmos and the Angels are discussed only in strictly delineated passages. There is, however, another essential difference. In his treatment of the two other paradigms, Ruusbroec appeals to knowledge acquired from books. Here, he refers to aspects of medieval society, as well as to what we might call practical experience from daily life. In this way, he presents God as the ideal liege lord, the lord of lords. In his conception, the human person is depicted as a vassal in the service of the great liege. The liege has been chosen freely by the vassal. This is a basic precondition for the contract between the liege and vassal. Thanks to redemption in Christ, the human person fulfills this requirement. The mystic describes this in the first, short passages. In the fourth part, where he describes the path that leads the human person to God, the vassal moves, as it were, from the periphery to the center of the kingdom in which the lord lives. Ruusbroec describes three lines in this movement. The first comprises the various moments of feudal homage. The second depicts a career at the court, from lowest messenger to the lord's confidante. The third line concerns *minne*. As the vassal moves closer to the lord, his *minne* for the lord increases. This reveals how the human vassal ultimately discovers the true nature of his relationship with the lord: he is His adoptive son and consequently, he is heir to the kingdom, which is God himself.[66] Finally, in the fifth part, Ruusbroec describes the human who governs the kingdom of his soul (the fief) as a king. He is characterized by the same traits as his lord.

In this paradigm, Ruusbroec places a particularly strong emphasis on the legal aspects of medieval society. In addition to the parallel between the liege and vassal, this involves the relationship between father and son. To a medieval person, this was just as much part of the feudal context, considering that the legal status of a person was determined principally by his descent. Hereditary descent indicated whether a person was 'noble' or in servitude. Humanity lost its freedom due to the Fall, but it was subsequently liberated by Christ, in the same way as a feudal lord was able to purchase a servant's freedom. Once free, the person was able to choose whether to remain in the service of his lord or not. In other words, he was able to turn away from his lord or turn towards him. When the latter occurred, it enabled the possibility for the person to develop socially. This is evident in the various tasks at the court. Incidentally, they show remarkable similarities to the functions that actually

65 An abbreviated version of this chapter, with an emphasis on justice, is published in Noë (2001b).

66 Christ is, of course, the real Son. In his human nature, he repeatedly reveals the implications of his choice, namely, of the conscious and free turn towards the Lord.

existed in Ruusbroec's time at the court of Duke John III of Brabant. The degree of realism in the image of feudalism must undoubtedly have made an impression on the readers/hearers at the time. The images associate the inner development of the human person with a very concrete social context. In the fifth part, Ruusbroec describes the apotheosis of the feudal image, referring to the mature mystic as 'common person.' Because he bears all the characteristics of *the* lord, he 'turns downward' as well. If he does not do this, he distances himself from the 'likeness' of his Lord, namely, working and simultaneously joyfully resting. Thus, 'higher' consists precisely in 'turning downward.' And this closes the circle.

It is an extraordinary mobile paradigm, which is strengthened in the many variants of 'turning: away, to, inward, downward.' It is one great, flowing whole. The author effectuates this, for example, by intimating the next feudal aspect at the end of each gift. For example, at the end of the 'loving fear of God,' he mentions the faithlessness of humanity in the Garden of Eden. In the next gift, that of 'benevolence,' this is transformed into faith. At the end of the third gift, 'true (*gherecht*) knowledge', at the end of the third gift, becomes 'directed upwards' (*opgherecht*) in the fourth gift of 'fortitude,' though this wordplay is only evident in the Middle Dutch text. Unfortunately, it is lost in English translation.

It is actually completely impossible to summarize the richness and the refinement of this paradigm. In fact, it is a perfect illustration of the biblical quote that forms the logical structure of the whole treatise. This is why the image of feudalism has such a crucial place in the *Realm*. And yet, it cannot be dissociated from the other paradigms. As mentioned above, Ruusbroec often connects metaphors from various paradigms in a horizontal way. This often leads to surprising and lyrical effects. Moreover, it appears to be a way to make the depth of the mystical experience more visible. For example, in the same breath, the author juxtaposes images of light and water, and these are frequently connected to spatial references. By using various registers of images at the same time, he not only achieves maximum effect, but he also defies the imagination of his readers/listeners so that their internal boundaries can be moved in one way or another. Ruusbroec's own words, however, say this far more eloquently than mine ever could. Such as in this quote from the last thirty lines of the *Realm*:[67]

> Now this person is to be common (to all) and is to possess his mind as a king possesses his realm [...] and this person, without cease, will be

67 Another fine example is to be found in the fifth and last part of the *Realm*, in which Ruusbroec refers to the end of time. See Noë (2000).

> hanging essentially in (God) with this same mind, in order to be transformed and transfigured into the abysmal resplendence, like the divine Persons [. . .] Thus the person common (to all) is to stand in the apex of his mind [. . .] always hanging essentially in (God), transported in enjoyment, and sinking away into his nothingness, that is, into the darkness of the Godhead [. . .] Thus he is transformed from splendor to splendor, that is, from created splendor to uncreated splendor, by means of his eternal image, that is, the Wisdom of the Father [. . .] This is a person enlightened and common (to all) in all nobility. (*Realm* E2611–2635)[68]

The above quote contains not only feudal images ('king,' 'realm,' 'nobility') but also a number of spatial metaphors ('hanging in,' 'abyssal'), some of which have the connotation of water ('sinking away'; unfortunately, 'transported' loses the aspect of water we find in the original *ontvlotenheiden*). The paradox 'abyssal resplendence' juxtaposes space and light, and in its impossibility—in this context darkness would appear more appropriate—it evokes a limitless, overwhelming experience. We find a similar use of imagery in the combination 'hanging in [. . .] transported.' Indeed, how can one be both stationary and simultaneously flow out of oneself? And how can a person who is 'transported into the darkness' be transformed 'from splendor to splendor'? Every impossibility is suggestive of the highest possibility that is ungraspable, which, in turn, stands in paradox to the king who 'possesses' his kingdom in itself. Ruusbroec thus expresses the apotheosis: the return into God.

In the wake of Wackers, Ceulemans, and Willaert, I also investigated the possible sources of Ruusbroec's imagery, which remain difficult to pinpoint precisely. In the *Realm*, the mystic names none of his sources and seldom quotes literally. And yet, it is very clear that concerning the imagery in the *Realm*, Ruusbroec was representative of his age. There is a clear affinity with the work of other mystical authors from the Rhineland. Furthermore, there is of course also a clearly discernible biblical influence. There are references to authors such as Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, William of Saint-Thierry, Bernard, and the Victorines. The influence of Pseudo-Dionysius is also evident.

68 *Nu sal dese mensche sijn een ghemein mensche, ende sal sijne ghedachte besitten alsoe een coninc sijn rike besidt* [. . .] *hi sal sonder onderlaet weseleec in hanghende sijn met diere selver ghedachten, op dat hi overformt ende overbeeldt werde in die afgrondighe claerheit, ghelijc den godliken persoenen* [. . .] *Also sal de ghemeine mensche staen in dat overste sire ghedachten* [. . .] *altoes weseleec in hanghende met ontvlotenheiden in ghebrukene, ende ontsinken in sinen niete, dat es in de deemsterheit der godheit* [. . .] *Also werdet hi ghetransformeert van claerheiden in claerheiden, dat es van ghescapenre claerheit in onghescapenre claerheit, overmids sijn ewighe beelde, dat es dies vader wijsheit* [. . .] *Dit es een verclaert ghemeyn mensche in alre edelheit* (*Realm* 2733–2756).

Ruusbroec integrates all these effortlessly. The unmistakable presence of Bonaventure's thought, however, is somewhat surprising. But Ruusbroec never copied indiscriminately. He was very selective, using only elements that supported his line of thought. He was a master of adapting and—if necessary—developing his various sources of inspiration.

Conclusion and More

What can we conclude from this research? It demonstrates, first, that if we trivialize his imagery, we ignore the author Ruusbroec. By decoding each link in the chain, his message becomes increasingly clear. Each stage of the mystical experience, including the highest, is represented with imagery. His use of metaphor has its own inner logic. It signifies far more than simply a (fine) packaging for the non-metaphorical content. While the theological-philosophical aspects of Ruusbroec's work demand a lot from the (modern) reader, his imagery is an essential guide. Finally, following Ceulemans and Willaert, I have also demonstrated the mnemonic function of the imagery in the *Realm*.[69] It would be completely impossible to digest and appreciate a work of such complexity as the *Realm* without the mnemonic images Ruusbroec provides for the reader—or listener—from the very beginning.

In my opinion, it is through his descriptive imagery (light, water, space) that Ruusbroec provides a basic outline that may be found in all his works. Apart from allowing ease of recognition, this method does not necessarily result in rigidity, as is evident from Ruusbroec's use of water metaphors in *Espousals*.[70] He does, of course, use his common modalities for water ('to flow,' 'float,' 'sink') with their alternating prefixes and, moreover, the water bearers ('fountain,' 'stream,' 'sea'). But in contrast to *Realm*, in which the image of water in the strict sense is clearly present from the very beginning of the work, in *Espousals* it is barely used until half way through the treatise.[71] There is, however, a secondary water image in which, incidentally, light is of primary importance to guarantee growth: the image of the tree. We find it on the boundary between the active and inner life. It represents the human person that unites heaven and earth. It is an extraordinary tree: 'which grows from above downwards, for

69 Willaert (1993b) also discussed other mnemonic elements in *Realm*.

70 Noë (2005), pp. 85–121. See also Faesen (2001).

71 In my opinion, this is related to the biblical quote upon which Ruusbroec's exposition is based. The emphasis is on *Siet* and, thus, on (forms of) light.

its roots are in the Godhead' (*Espousals* E840–841; *die wast van boven nederweert, want sine wortele es inder godheit, Espousals* 987–988). This kind of tree is a universal image for the human person who turns towards God, the sun, and who experiences an inner transformative process as a result. Ruusbroec develops this description with such vivid imagery that we almost see its development before our eyes.

When, in *The Sparkling Stone*—the title announces the idea—he describes a little stone that is shiny, red and white, completely round and tiny; he catches the reader's attention and thus guides him through the treatise.[72] In this way, he provides the reader with an insight into his activity, passivity, and his inner growth to the highest mystical experience. Here too, Ruusbroec's image is inspired by the Bible (Apocalypse), and he is firmly rooted in tradition: the red and white stone is a symbol of Christ; God and man.[73]

From all the more recent studies on Ruusbroec's imagery, it has emerged that the mystic apparently saw his images, wrote them down for his readers as reference points, and then gradually analyzed and unraveled them over the course of his argument. We know that this is a (literary) technique that appeals to information already in the memory of the reader in order to generate more knowledge and to make new connections that lead to fresh insights. In Ruusbroec's eyes—and not only in his but also in those of every medieval person—the possibilities offered by the memory are absolutely indispensible in the development of the relationship between God and the human person.[74] By repeatedly bringing stored knowledge to the fore, and meditating and ruminating on it, one appropriates this knowledge. Ultimately, the only thing that remains is what really matters. This process forms the human person and leads him to a deeper level of consciousness. In this sense, we can justifiably refer to the memory as *sacra*.[75] These conclusions place Ruusbroec's use of metaphor, which in the past was often considered the breaking point in judgments of his literary qualities, in a totally new light.

It was not only the Brabantine mystic's imagery that came under fire, however; the same fate befell his poetic qualities.

---

72 See Noë (2010), pp. 479–496.

73 Cf. the second little book in *Enclosures*.

74 See Noë (2002). Cf. Scheepsma (2005), pp. 217–226. This also applies to images that are considered distasteful. See de Baere (1996b), pp. 83–92.

75 See Iris Murdoch in the third chapter of her *The Sovereignty of Good*: 'The development of consciousness in human beings is inseparably connected with the use of metaphor. Metaphors are not merely peripheral decorations or even useful models; they are fundamental forms of our awareness of our condition: metaphors of space, metaphors of movement, metaphors of vision.' Murdoch (1970), p. 77.

Frank Willaert treated this disputed aspect of Ruusbroec's authorship in a short investigation.[76] He did not allow himself to be tempted to make an aesthetic judgment. Instead, he questioned, in all soberness, where and when the mystic uses rhyme and what the function of these verses might be. Presumably, his intended audience played some role, alongside the difficulty of his text itself. The verses are often intended to be short summaries of what preceded them. There are a number of fine examples in the *Realm*. Ruusbroec's exposition on each of the Holy Spirit's gifts is concluded with a rhyme: 'thanks to their brevity, their surveyable structure and their triple repetition, [they are] ideally suited to impress upon the readers the essence of what they have just learned.'[77] Here again, we must note the importance of the memory. Because each of these verses concludes the discussion of the individual gifts, they also structure the text. Willaert indicates that Ruusbroec applies the same procedure in the first part of the *Espousals*, in which he treats a series of virtues that each expel a mortal sin. These virtues are concluded in the same way as the Holy Spirit's gifts in the *Realm*. The question is whether these verses or rhymed prose are merely functional, but presumably they are not. According to Willaert, Ruusbroec undoubtedly sought to create a certain stylistic effect. Further research is required, however, to assess the value of Ruusbroec's verses.

In addition to treatises, either with or without verses, Ruusbroec also wrote letters, the exact number of which is unknown. Moreover, no originals are extant. And to make matters even more complex, we know them only (with one probable exception) from Surius' Latin translation. Thom Mertens has researched and published the letters.[78] On the basis of customs and rules for letter writing in the Middle Ages, he concludes that Ruusbroec was clearly well acquainted with the protocols. Nonetheless, he also makes a personal contribution. Indeed, not infrequently, he begins his letters with 'a gnomic, aphoristic expression' such as in the first letter: 'Whoever loves God is worthy of all honor.'[79]

Ruusbroec: An Adept Medieval Author

The discussion above demonstrates how this 14th-century mystic bent tradition to his own insights. We now consider this to be creative. A medieval per-

76 Willaert (1993a), pp. 141–155. See also Warnar (2000b).

77 Willaert (1993a), p. 149.

78 Mertens (1990).

79 Ibid., p. 59.

son would probably have considered it to be evidence of divine inspiration, though the Groenendaal miniature highlights not only this aspect but also the art of writing itself. We now know that soon after, a very pernicious fixation—lasting centuries—on divine inspiration emerged, depriving us of a clear perspective on Ruusbroec's capacities as a writer. Over the past 30 years, however, a shift has occurred from a fixed concept of literature to an understanding that takes the particularity of a certain period and cultural context into account, at least to the greatest possible extent. Thanks to this approach, in the most recent research, the author Ruusbroec is revealed to be a representative of his time. He adhered to tradition and used the literary techniques customary at the time. The prominent role of memory is particularly striking in this regard. It is important for two reasons: on the one hand, to be able to write about his journey to God and union with Him; and on the other, to give his readers and listeners the opportunity to develop their own memory further and to clarify and foster their own journey to God. To this end, Ruusbroec used both his own experiences as well as available knowledge stored in the recesses of his memory. He would undoubtedly also have used scholarly books. He freely arranged all this science and knowledge into a logical, but also expressive, exposition. Consequently, though the content and form of his work can be distinguished, they cannot be separated. Or, as Warnar formulates it: 'The form here is part of the content.'[80] For those who take the trouble, an open perspective on all these aspects makes reading Ruusbroec's works an incomparably interesting experience, even now.

80 Oosterman & Willaert (2003), p. 10.

Essential Themes in Ruusbroec's Mysticism

Bernard McGinn

A passage from Jan Van Ruusbroec's masterpiece,* *The Spiritual Espousals*,[1] can introduce the essential themes of the Brabantine canon's mysticism:

> Every lover is one with God and at rest, and God-like in the activity of love; for God, in his sublime nature of which we bear a likeness, dwells with enjoyment in eternal rest, with respect to the essential oneness, and with working, in eternal activity, with respect to threeness; and each is the perfection of the other, for rest resides in oneness and activity in threeness. And thus both remain for eternity. And therefore, if a person is to relish God, he must love; and if he is willing to love, then he can taste.[2]

This text highlights many of the terms that are central to Ruusbroec's theology—love, rest, activity, nature, likeness, enjoyment, essential oneness, working, threeness, and taste. The passage also shows that the goal Ruusbroec holds out for his readers is a union that is essentially Trinitarian in nature: '. . . the rest resides in the oneness and the activity in the threeness,' *precisely because* 'each is the perfection of the other.' Ruusbroec concludes by insisting that it is the power of love that enables us to enter into the inner life of the interaction of the three who are one God.

Ruusbroec's mysticism resists easy classification. Although he was not scholastically trained, Ruusbroec was widely read in mystical literature, so it is important to study him in the context of the wider mystical tradition. He wrote in the vernacular, but translations into Latin gave him a broad European audience. Few mystics of his time or since yield to him in the power to evoke the mystery of the ineffable contact with God that is the core of mysticism, but reading Ruusbroec at length reveals considerable repetition and occasional obscurity. In order to try to present a short but comprehensive picture of the

---

* Parts of this contribution have also been published in the chapter on Ruusbroec in McGinn (2012), pp. 5–61.

1 On Ruusbroec's life and writings, see Warnar (2007). For an analysis of Ruusbroec's place in medieval mysticism, see Ruh (1999), pp. 29–82. For a brief account of the significance of Ruusbroec's theology, see McGinn (2006).

2 *Espousals* Eb1719–b1725 (b1996–b2004).

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_07

great Brabantine mystic, I will concentrate on three essential aspects of his teaching: his dynamic theology of the Trinity; his distinctive anthropology; and, finally, his view of the path to union with God.

The Trinity as Working and Enjoying

The Trinitarian nature of Ruusbroec's mysticism is not a new discovery.[3] Nor was Ruusbroec the first Trinitarian mystic. All Christian mystics are Trinitarian in some way or other, but there is a difference between figures such as Bernard of Clairvaux, who refer to the action of the Trinity in the soul from time to time, and those, such as his friend William of Saint-Thierry, who give the inner life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit a central role in their mystical thought.[4] In the century before Ruusbroec, both Bonaventure and Meister Eckhart made forms of dynamic Trinitarianism integral to their mysticism,[5] and some women mystics, such as the beguine Hadewijch, whose writings were known to Ruusbroec,[6] also made original contributions to Trinitarian mysticism. Nevertheless, Ruusbroec forms a special case, both because of the *originality* of his theology of the Trinity and also because of the *constitutive* role he gives the divine Tri-unity.[7] As he put it in the *Twelve Beguines*: 'And although, above all our createdness, we are all essential unity with God, eternally inactive and without work, with God we are also a fruitful threeness of persons, living and working above all createdness of creatures.'[8]

Ruusbroec mined a rich tradition of Trinitarian mysticism. The master paradigm of *exitus* and *reditus*, the procession of all things out from and their return into God, inherited from pagan Platonic and Neo-Platonic thinkers, had long been utilized by Christian thinkers. What was distinctive of Christian Neo-Platonism was bringing the dynamic process of flow and return into the

3 See Ampe (1950a) and Henry (1952 & 1953). For studies of Ruusbroec's teaching on the Trinity in English, see Dupré (1984), Boon (2003), and, especially, Van Nieuwenhove (2003).

4 William of Saint-Thierry was a major source for Ruusbroec, as shown by Verdeyen (1977) and Pak (2008), pp. 467–526.

5 McGinn (2007).

6 On Hadewijch and Ruusbroec, see Axters (1964b) and Reynaert (1981a).

7 Ruusbroec has been called both a 'phenomenologist of mystical experience' (e.g., Joseph Alaerts and Paul Mommaers) and a 'mystical theologian' (Rik Van Nieuwenhove). I see no reason why he cannot be both. As a theologian, however, Ruusbroec must not be seen within the categories of scholastic theology but, rather, as a proponent of the 'vernacular theology' of the late Middle Ages. See McGinn (1998), pp. 19–24.

8 *Beguines* E1:645–648.

divine being itself as a way of expressing the Church's faith in God as a Trinity of Persons. This form of 'understanding of faith' (*intellectus fidei*) owed much to the way that some Neo-Platonists, especially Proclus, analyzed the universal law of procession and return according to a pattern of three essential and concomitant moments or stages—*monê*, that is, the First Principle in itself as transcendent, unknowable, and unmoving; *proodos*, the Principle understood as the active source of other realities; and *epistrophê*, the Principle as the end or goal, attracting all things back to itself. Dionysius, the 5th-century author of the *Mystical Theology*, adapted this pattern to expound the immanent-transcendent relation between the biblical God and creation. He and other Christians went further in taking over the triadic Neo-Platonic hierarchies based on this view of reality in the service of Trinitarian theology. For the pagan Neo-Platonists, the first and highest stage of emanation from the hidden One formed a triad of Being-Life-Intellect. Beginning with Marius Victorinus in the 4th century and Dionysius in the 5th, this triad was used to express what could be known positively (cataphatically) about the processions and relations within the Trinity, rather than just in the realm of created dependency. The intra-divine flow of life found in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit came to be seen as not only the source but also the exemplar of extra-divine dynamism of creation and return. The teachings of Bonaventure and Meister Eckhart are medieval versions of this theology of the Trinity; Jan van Ruusbroec's mysticism is another.[9]

The Neo-Platonic paradigm of 'inward rest—outward flow—returning' appears in many forms throughout Ruusbroec's corpus.[10] A text from the *Twelve Beguines* provides a summation of the role of the primal *monê*: 'Unity in love is always constantly inward (*inblivende*), unmoved (*onbewecht*), a fathomless abyss in enjoyment and blessedness.'[11] This unmoved Oneness of the deity is the foundation and source of the 'flux and reflux' (*vloeyen ende wedervloeien*) that Ruusbroec locates principally in the Trinity and secondarily in creation. An earlier passage from the same work summarizes his view of *proodos* and *epistrophê*:

> … In the relations of the persons there is mutual knowledge and love, flux and reflux between the Father and the Son by means of the Holy Spirit, who is the love of them both. But the oneness of the Holy Spirit, in

9 For comparisons of the Trinitarian theologies of Ruusbroec and his 13th-century predecessors, see Van Nieuwenhove (1998) and (2001b).

10 On Ruusbroec's relation to Neo-Platonism, see Henry (1952 & 1953) and Reypens (1932c).

11 *Beguines* E2b:2065–2066.

> whom the persons live and reign, is active in the outflowing (*uutvloeiene*), and fruitfully operating all things according to the free nobility, wisdom and power of the Persons. But in the inflowing (*invloeyene*) of the persons the oneness of the Holy Spirit is enjoyably drawing inwards and containing the persons above distinction, in an enjoyment of fathomless love that God himself is in being and nature.[12]

Although such texts are based on the inherited Neo-Platonic paradigm, Ruusbroec's understanding of this view of reality, both in its transcendent origin and its created manifestation, is very much his own. In analyzing his teaching on the Trinity, it is important to be true to Ruusbroec's fundamental insight concerning the continuous concomitance of perfect inner fruition ('the enjoyment of fathomless love') and the simultaneous 'outflowing and inflowing' that constitute the three persons, their circumincession, and their return to the 'fathomless abyss that is God's essence' (*grondeloes abys dat gods wesen es*).[13] Ruusbroec's teaching on the Trinity always remained true to these dynamic polarities.[14] The goal of the mystical life is to achieve a greater and greater share in the fusion of the opposed motions that are simultaneous and concomitant in God, but usually experienced in our temporal domain as distinct and successive. What we conceive of in terms of opposition and alternation (essence vs. activity; going out vs. going in; unity vs. multiplicity) in God and in those who come to share in God's life is a dialectical simultaneity of complementary aspects of divine love.[15] This is apparent in a passage from the second book of the *Spiritual Espousals*:

> For charity in the likeness must be eternally active, but oneness with God in enjoyable love will be forever at rest. And this is what it is to love. For in one now, one instant, love acts and rests in its beloved. And the one is reinforced by the other. For the higher the love, the more the rest; and the more the rest, the more inner the love. For the one lives in the other . . . . Every lover is one with God and at rest, and God-like in the activity of love.[16]

---

12 *Beguines* E2b:44–52.

13 *Beguines* 1:659–660.

14 The dynamic character of Ruusbroec's mysticism has been stressed by Mommaers (1984a), (1995c)–(1997), and Mommaers & Van Bragt (1995), pp. 156–177.

15 On the need for seeing the 'alternating phases' of the Trinitarian life as simultaneous and complementary, see Ampe (1972), especially cols 685–686, and Van Nieuwenhove (2003), p. 194.

16 *Espousals* Eb1708–b1719.

This fusion comes to be realized in those who love God because it is first and foremost found in God himself, who, as the text cited at the outset says, 'dwells with enjoyment in eternal rest with respect to the essential oneness (*weselijcker eenheit*), and with working in eternal activity with respect to the threeness . . .'[17]

The different aspects of what Paul Henry termed Ruusbroec's 'dialectic of opposed but complementary moments' synthesizes themes rooted in the Christian appropriation of Greek philosophy, such as the opposition between unity and multiplicity, flowing out and flowing in,[18] ineffability and nameability.[19] One way in which Ruusbroec presents the polarities, namely, the difference between the divine 'modelessness' (*onwise*) and the 'modes' (*wise*) of the three persons and all created things, is reminiscent of Eckhart and his followers.[20] But the fundamental way in which the canon expresses the dialectical nature of God is the polarity between *wesen* (being/essence) and *werk* (operation/activity). As Albert Ampe put it, 'Essence and activity are the two dialectical moments that command the Trinitarian theology of Ruusbroec.'[21]

Wesen and its derivatives are frequent terms in Ruusbroec.[22] As the investigations of Albert Deblaere and Joseph Alaerts have shown, the words 'essence/essential' (*wesen/weselijc*), as well as their transcendental correlatives 'superessence/superessential' (*overwesen/overweselijc*), appear across Ruusbroec's writings with a variety of meanings.[23] Whereas scholastic Latin had a range of words to express being—*esse* (the act of being or existing), *essentia* (being as essence), and *ens* (a being)—Ruusbroec's Middle Dutch made do essentially with the single root term, *wesen*. The canon uses the word and its cognates in such a subtle variety of ways,[24] however, that what might seem to be a hindrance or deficiency is actually a strength. As with Meister Eckhart's language of the *grunt*, or ground (also found in Ruusbroec), creative use of a common

17 *Espousals* Eb1720–b1722. 'Essential oneness' (*weselijcke eenicheit*) is particularly stressed in the *Espousals*, where it appears 13 times. Pak (2008), pp. 133–137, points out that *eenicheit* is a multivalent term for Ruusbroec, possessing at least four different meanings: unity of mind; unification of the faculties; union with God; and the divine unity itself.

18 On the use of flowing and turning in and out in Ruusbroec, see Groot (1987).

19 Henry (1952), pp. 338–341.

20 The modelessness (*onwise*) of the divine essence is a constant teaching of Ruusbroec: e.g., the apophatic description of the 'kingdom of God' in *Enclosures* 838–867 and *Realm* 1944–1957, where *onwise* appears nine times.

21 Ampe (1972), col. 683.

22 *Wesen* appears 56 times in *Realm* and 49 times in *Espousals*.

23 Deblaere (1960), especially cols 1351–1359; also Alaerts (1975b) and (1975c).

24 Alaerts (1975c) specifies five different domains in which Ruusbroec employs *weselijc* and its cognates.

vernacular term allows for possibilities of expression not found in the more rigid linguistic world of Latin.[25] If one wishes to characterize Ruusbroec's message as an 'essential mysticism,' it would be a mistake to understand this description in the light of scholastic understandings of *essentia*. Ruusbroec's 'essentialism' is fundamentally a mystical theology of dynamic love, not a metaphysical examination of the nature of essence in the abstract.[26]

The *Rungs*, which lays out the soul's seven stages of ascent to God, presents a synopsis of Ruusbroec's teaching on the divine essence and persons in the analysis of the seventh step. In this final stage the soul passes into 'fathomless unknowing' (*grondelooes nietweten*) and 'eternal namelessness' (*eeweghe onghenaemtheit*) where 'we behold and discover in ourselves eternal emptiness in which no one can work.'[27] Many of the terms and images that Ruusbroec uses to express the 'essential' aspect of the divine mystery can be found in the first two parts of this discussion. All creatures, he says, sink away into 'that same One that the blessedness itself is in its selfhood' (E1002–1003). Here they are lost in 'their superessence, in a modeless unknown darkness' (E1004–1005). (In Ruusbroec's vocabulary, the term 'superessence' refers to what is essential to God and therefore superessential to us and every created thing.)[28] In this highest stage we not only behold the persons of the Trinity but also discover the possibility of going beyond all the stages to attain 'God in his Godhead, one tranquil being and eternal blessedness' (E1012–1013). The one essence and three persons, however, are inseparable; God is always both eternal activity in the persons and 'in the essence eternal tranquility.'[29]

The inseparability of essence and persons, activity and tranquility, is rooted in God's nature as love. Ruusbroec analyzes this concomitance in terms of the relationship between 'love' (*minne*) and 'enjoyment' (*ghebruken*).[30]

---

25 Ruusbroec employs *gront/grond* only 12 times in *Realm*, but no fewer than 53 times in *Espousals*. On Eckhart's use of *grunt*, see McGinn (2001), ch. 3.

26 See Deblaere (1960), col. 1359; also Alaerts (1975b), pp. 314, 328, and (1975c), p. 340.

27 *Rungs* VII extends from line 1050 to line 1198 of the critical edition. This passage is 1052–1056.

28 Deblaere (1960), col. 1352. This teaching appears in many places, e.g., *Little Book* 448–455; *Enclosures* 850–858; *Rungs* 1157–1160; and *Beguines* 1:647–651, 2a:568–570, and 2a:630–632.

29 *Rungs* 1070–1071: *Ende aldus es god in den personen eewegh werc ende in den wesene eeweghe ledegheit*. The critical edition translates the last words as 'endless inactivity,' but this may give the wrong impression, as the following lines make clear. The essence does not act, but its tranquil emptiness (*ledegheit*), receptivity, or absolute freedom is the ground of all activity. Surius suggests this when he translates the passage as *in essentia autem perpetuum ocium et vacatio*.

30 *Minne* is a central theme for Ruusbroec. Among helpful treatments is Cook (2000). *Ghebruken* appears almost as often and is much discussed. See especially Koehler (1964).

> Love always wants to be active, for it is an eternal work of God. Enjoyment always has to be tranquil, for it is, above willing and desiring, beloved in beloved, in bare love without images, where the Father with the Son has embraced his beloved ones in the enjoyable unity of the Holy Spirit.[31]

Thus *minne* without a qualifier expresses the active aspect of divine love, while *ghebruken* indicates the passive delight of the modeless loving union where the blessed 'lose their spirit, melt away, flow away, and become one spirit with God in enjoyment, eternally inclined into the fathomless blessedness of his being' (E1025–1027). Despite Ruusbroec's frequent use of apophatic language reminiscent of Eckhart, there are clear differences between the Brabantine canon and the German Dominican. For Ruusbroec, God's resting in his essence is not primarily the Eckhartian divine 'no-thing' but is at root a modality of the ultimate form of love he calls 'essential love' (*weselijke minne*).[32] Essential love is the higher fusion of the passive *ghebruken* and the active, yearning *minne*. In an important passage on union in the *Little Book of Enlightenment*, Ruusbroec says of the interior man:

> Above reason and above the active life he is lifted up in naked vision and without work in essential love. And there he is one spirit and one love with God, . . . In this essential love he infinitely transcends his understanding by means of the unity which he has essentially with God—and this is the life of the contemplative man.[33]

The *Twelve Beguines* speaks of the transformation worked by essential love as becoming 'the same form as God' and concludes: 'This is the noblest and the highest that we possess, savor or feel in this life.'[34] Therefore, although God's *wesen* involves 'superessential darkness' (*Faith* 271), 'eternal stillness' (*Realm* 2420), and other apophatic denominations, it is always also essential love—a positive name.

---

31 *Rungs* E1015–1021.

32 *Weselijcke minne* occurs 29 times in Ruusbroec's corpus, though in differing proportions. It appears sparsely in the early works, not being found in *Realm* and occurring only once in *Espousals* (b 1592). It is also found only once in *Mirror* (766), *Stone* (919), and *Enclosures* (843). The term appears no fewer than 15 times in *Tabernacle* and in *Little Book* (265–266, 285, 288, 333, 339, 502) and *Beguines* (2b:862, 2b:957–958, 2b:2089–2092, and 2c:807).

33 *Little Book* E246–251.

34 *Beguines* E2b:1945–1946. For other important treatments of *weselijcke minne*, see *Enclosures* 842–851; and *Tabernacle* 4:1040, 1692, 1838, and 1947; and 6:286.

The account of the first mode of attaining the seventh stage through 'fathomless unknowing' is followed by a description of 'another mode' that leads to the enjoyment of God, namely, the path of renunciation of self and creatures and turning to God 'in burning love' (1092). As the analysis proceeds (1085–1154), it is clear that the second mode is not really different from the first but, rather, emphasizes the affective aspect of the final stage of the path of both knowing and loving in the ascent to God. Once again, *minne* and *ghebruken* are seen as the two poles of the dialectical action of divine love, that is, the Holy Spirit itself, as it breathes us out and in:

> Our work is to love God; our enjoyment is to undergo being embraced in God's love. Between loving and enjoying [there] is the [same] distinction as between God and his grace. Where we cleave to God with love, we are spirits, but where he makes us lose our spirit and transforms us by his Spirit, we are enjoying. The Spirit of God breathes us forth for loving and for working virtues, and he breathes us back into him for resting and enjoying.[35]

The concomitance of loving and enjoying means that on the spiritual path, and even after we reach the goal, we are never static but 'must always go up and down the rungs of our heavenly ladder' (E1075–1076). Participation in the simultaneous and eternal dynamism of the divine essence and the divine activity is our goal.

The final part of the description of the last stage in the *Rungs* (1145–1198) recapitulates Ruusbroec's teaching about how all modalities, even those of the persons of the Trinity, become one in the modeless and unknown divine *wesen*. Then the canon turns to a treatment of the emanation of the three persons. He begins with a discussion of the divine unity that makes use of a number of the terms, symbols, and images for the essence that appear throughout his works. Our fervent desire for God, according to Ruusbroec, is what leads us back to the Trinity and beyond:

> All together we are one burning blaze that can never perish with the Father and with the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit, where the divine persons lose their spirit in the unity of their essence, in the fathomless abyss of simple blessedness. There, there is neither Father nor Son nor Holy Spirit, nor any creature. There, there is nothing but one being, that is the substance of the divine persons. There we are all one and uncreated

35 *Rungs* E1057–1064.

> in our superessence. There all enjoying is completed and perfected in essential blessedness. There God is in his simple essence without activity, eternal tranquility, modeless darkness, unnamed self-identity, the superessence of all creatures, and the simple, fathomless blessedness of God and all the saints.[36]

This passage offers a convenient summary of many of the terms Ruusbroec used to express the hidden divine essence (our 'superessence').[37] They suggest comparisons with the divine naming found in other mystics of the late Middle Ages, both Dutch and German. For example, in speaking of the divine essence as a 'fathomless abyss' (*abys/afgront*), Ruusbroec utilizes an image found among many late medieval mystics, such as Hadewijch.[38] In a passage from the *Spiritual Tabernacle*, Ruusbroec uses the same text that his contemporary John Tauler did from Ps. 41:8 ('Abyss calls out to abyss') to express the loving union between the divine abyss and its created image, the abyss of the soul as the true *imago dei*.[39] Another symbol utilized by late medieval mystics to point to the inexpressible emptiness of the divinity was that of the desert.[40] Hence it is no surprise to find Ruusbroec employing desert and abyss as correlative symbols in a poem from Book 4 of the *Realm of Lovers*: 'This is how He is grasped/ and (how) Love (is) possessed by lover/ in the solitude of the desert:/ thus we shall remain/ and all our life strain/ in the exalted abyss.'[41] The abyss is exalted, but also a mystery—'the abyss of namelessness,' as he puts it in one place (*Espousals* c242).[42]

Another image for the boundlessness of the divine nature Ruusbroec used also has deep roots in Christian tradition. In the second book of the *Spiritual Espousals* he declares:

---

36 *Rungs* E1089–1100.

37 For a list, see Deblaere (1960), col. 1352.

38 On the language of the abyss, see McGinn (1996b).

39 *Tabernacle* 4:1878–80. This passage begins a discussion of God's four 'abyssal characteristics' (*afgrondege eigenscape*) in 4:1883–1912. For Tauler's teaching on the dual abyss, see McGinn (2005), pp. 249–250 and 262–264.

40 See McGinn (1994), which briefly treats Ruusbroec on pp. 178–179.

41 *Realm* E2099–2104. Ruusbroec uses the desert theme elsewhere. Like Eckhart, the desert can refer both to the inner solitude of the Godhead (e.g., *Realm* 2111–2112, 2378–2381, 2445–2447; *Enclosures* 160–163; *Espousals* b1036–b1037), and also of the soul insofar as its inner essence is 'a wild waste desert wherein God lives who reigns over us' (*Mirror* 2155–2157; see also *Stone* 754–758).

42 There are approximately 25 texts with abyss language apart from those in the *Tabernacle*.

> God is a flowing, ebbing sea, which flows without cease into all his beloved, according to each one's needs and dignity. And he is ebbing back in again, drawing all those whom he has endowed in heaven and earth, together with all that they have and can do.[43]

In the fourth century, the desert father Evagrius Ponticus had used the sea as an image of the absolute oneness of the divine nature. In this passage, Ruusbroec employs it to present the flowing out and flowing back into the essence, but in other texts the sea signifies the divine *wesen* itself, as when he observes 'one may observe many a marvel in the fathomless sea of the Godhead' (*Espousals* Eb894–895). If the sea is a widely used image among mystics, another aquatic symbol employed by Ruusbroec is more distinctive—that of God as a whirlpool. In the *Realm of Lovers*, speaking of the ceaseless activity of divine love, he says: 'With respect to its in-flowing, it is essential, overflowing all who are united in an incomprehensible savoring. This is the bottomless whirlpool where all noble minds are hanging in (God) in enjoyment and sunken away in lostness.'[44] The whirlpool metaphor, also found in Hadewijch, is especially apt for presenting the paradox of the Godhead as motionless motion—the still point at the center of the vortex created by constant circling of the waters. This is expressed in a passage from the *Little Book of Enlightenment* where Ruusbroec describes the 'experience of superessential beatitude' as 'a dark silence that is always inactive'[45]—something essential to God and superessential to all creatures. 'And there,' he continues, 'you must accept that the persons yield and lose themselves whirling about in essential love, that is, in enjoyable unity; nevertheless, they always remain according to their personal properties in the working of the Trinity.'[46]

The final 35 lines of the description of the last stage of the *Seven Rungs* provides a brief summary of the other pole of Ruusbroec's dialectical view of God, that is, the Trinitarian processions. Like Bonaventure before him, the Dutch

---

43 *Espousals* Eb987–990; see also *Realm* 1261–1267. Sometimes the image of the sea is ascribed to the Holy Spirit as the source of motion out and in. See, e.g., *Realm* 2335–2336.

44 *Realm* E2250–2254. See also *Realm* 1926–1927; *Beguines* 2a:569–570; *Espousals* c247; and *Stone* 133.

45 The term 'dark silence' (*duustere stille*) also occurs in *Espousals* b1034–1038 and c253.

46 *Little Book* E284–289. A similar passage occurs in *Realm* E2616–2620, which speaks of a person '… hanging essentially in (God) … in order to be transformed and transfigured into the abysmal resplendence like the divine persons, who at every moment are whirling away into the abysmal essence (*verwielen in dat afgrondighe wesen*) and who are overflowing in enjoyment …'

mystic emphasizes the primordial plenitude of the Father as the source of the Son and Holy Spirit:

> But in the fruitful nature the Father is an almighty God, Creator and Maker of heaven and earth and all creatures. And from his nature he bears his Son, his eternal Wisdom as one with him in nature, another in person, God from God, by whom all things were made. And the Holy Spirit, the third person, who flows from the Father and from the Son, who is one with them in nature: that is their fathomless Love in which they are eternally embraced in love and enjoyment, and we all with them—one life, one love, one enjoyment. God is one in his nature, threeness in fruitfulness, three persons separate as to distinctions. And the three persons are oneness in nature, threeness in their proper ground.[47]

What is important to note here is that the Father's primordiality as the source of the other persons is ascribed to the divine *natuere*, not the *wesen*. This usage is consistent in Ruusbroec, and it signifies that the divine unity ('the Simple One': *dat eenvuldeghe een*)[48] can be understood from two perspectives: that of *wesen* as eternal tranquil rest and enjoyment, and that of *natuere*, which is the Father taken in himself, the primal source of all emanation.[49] As a text from the *Twelve Beguines* declares, 'The essence of God is inactive, eternal beginning and end, a living support of everything created. The same essence is nature and fruitfulness and potentiality of the persons.'[50] A similar distinction between the divine essence and nature as the source of the Persons is found in Thomas Aquinas.[51]

The large number of the passages in Ruusbroec dealing with the Trinity makes his teaching difficult to summarize. His earliest work, the *Realm of Lovers*, discusses the Trinitarian processions frequently in analyzing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Here the Brabantine mystic makes use of the analogy to the Trinity pioneered by Augustine, who saw the mind's activation of memory, wisdom/understanding, and love as a way to point toward the three persons in

47 *Rungs* E1100–1109.

48 *Rungs* 1025. This term is reminiscent of Eckhart's use of *das einig ein* as a characterization of divine unity.

49 Ampe (1950a), pp. 84–90, 216, and, following him, Henry (1952), pp. 341–351, viewed nature as an intermediary between essence and persons (though all three are in reality one). Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 87–91, argues that *wesen* and *natuere* are two ways of viewing the same pole of the divine being.

50 *Beguines* E2a:528–530.

51 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 39, a. 2, ad 3.

the one God. Under the gift of spiritual fortitude, for example, Ruusbroec writes: 'With respect to the divine nature . . . the memory of the Father contemplates without cease his bottomless wisdom, namely, his Son; and the eternal Son, without cease, contemplates the unity of the fruitful nature of the Fatherhood. Out of this contemplation of the two persons with one wisdom, namely, the Son, there flows bottomless love, namely, the Holy Spirit.' He goes on in poetic form: 'Love binds together the two persons in unity,/ And there is always hunger of the two persons in loving./ This hunger is to desire ever to flow into unity/ And without cease to give birth in the exalted Trinity.'[52] Although this triad within the mind was a commonplace in medieval thought, Ruusbroec's early treatment already hints an original aspect of his view of the Trinity, namely, the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing back the persons of Father and Son into the divine unity. His position becomes clearer in the treatment of the gift of counsel, where he speaks of the Spirit as the Love by which 'the persons are embraced and penetrated and have flowed back into that unity out of which the Father without cease is giving birth . . . This birth-giving and flowing-back into unity is the work of the Trinity.'[53]

The later works continue to develop this distinctive Trinitarian theology. The primal nature of the Father's fruitfulness was central for Ruusbroec. In the third book of the *Spiritual Espousals* he speaks of it as 'a beginning without beginning' (Ec109). Ruusbroec can even say that 'The Father is the principle of all Godhead with respect to being and persons.'[54] This is why the Brabantine canon, like Eckhart, sometimes speaks of the divine nature, God as One, as the Father. The way in which the paternal primordiality comes to active expression in the emanation of the Son is often expressed in terms of fatherly self-knowledge. The text about the 'beginning without beginning' cited above occurs in the midst of a discussion of the Trinity that starts from how all three persons of the Trinity indwell 'in the superessential unity, in rest and enjoyment . . . above the distinction of persons' (Ec103–c106). Ruusbroec then turns to an analysis of how the eternal going-out of the Son from the Father, as well as of all things in their virtual existence in God, takes place, emphasizing the role of the Father's knowledge.

> For as the almighty Father has perfectly comprehended himself in the ground of his fruitfulness, the Son, the eternal Word of the Father, has gone out as another person in the Godhead. And through the eternal

52 *Realm* E1070–1079. See also the account of the gift of wisdom in 2241–2254.

53 *Realm* E1536–1541.

54 *Espousals* Eb1179–b1780.

> birth all creatures have gone out eternally before they were created in time.[55]

The same activity is subsequently analyzed in terms of light and life (reminiscent of the Johannine Prologue). Ruusbroec says:

> For we find that the bosom of the Father is our own ground and our origin in which we begin our life and our being. And out of our proper ground—that is, out of the Father and out of all that is living in him—there shines an eternal brightness, which is the birth of the Son. And in this brightness, that is in the Son, the Father and everything that is living in him is manifest to himself. For all that he is and all that he has he gives to the Son with the sole exception of the property of Fatherhood which he alone retains.[56]

The exemplarity of the Second Person as the divine mirror containing the transcendent archetypes of all things is the root of the role of the Word Incarnate in the economy of salvation. Ruusbroec's teaching about the exemplarity of the emanation of the Second Person of the Trinity from the Father has affinities both with Bonaventure and Eckhart, though once again his treatment bears its own stamp. Even more original is the way the Brabantine mystic presents the action of the Holy Spirit in the dynamism of *exitus* and *reditus*, both within and without God.

Like all Western theologians, Ruusbroec insisted that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son as conjoint source. In the *Twelve Beguines* and elsewhere, he explains how the Holy Spirit comes from the mutual knowing of Father and Son. The Father 'recognizes his only-begotten Son' both unborn in himself and as being born. The Son, as the Wisdom of the Father, 'looks back into his source' and sees both the Father and himself as unborn and also as 'flowing out in personal otherness from the substance of the Father.' Ruusbroec continues:

> In this mutual seeing between Father and Son there flows an eternal complacency, that is, the Holy Spirit, the third person, who flows out from them both. For he is one will and one love in both of them, and out

55 *Espousals* Ec109–c113. This 'double-flow' of both the Son and creation is Eckhartian in tone.

56 *Espousals* Ec136–c143. For other texts on the birth of the Son as exemplary for the existence of all things, see, e.g., *Espousals* 210–213 and *Realm* 2084–2093.

> of them eternally flowing-out and flowing back into the nature of the Godhead.[57]

The same teaching is found in *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*. Here Ruusbroec emphasizes the circumincession of the three persons rooted in their emanations:

> In the fruitful nature the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father, but in the Father the Son is sonly and unborn, like an indwelling fruit of his nature . . . But in the birth the Son is another person, eternally going out from the Father; and the Holy Spirit [is] the third person, flowing out like a burning glow, the love of them both, into all creatures that are prepared for it.[58]

While many Latin theologians recognized the Holy Spirit as the love that binds Father and Son together, both in the inner life of the three persons and in the love they pour out in creating, no one before Ruusbroec had so strongly emphasized the centrality of the Spirit's role in *regyratio* (*wederboechde*), that is, the flowing back of all things into God and, ultimately, the return of the divine persons themselves into the bottomless abyss of divinity. As Rik Van Nieuwenhove has shown, the key to Ruusbroec's innovation in this regard is his recognition that the Holy Spirit is not just the passive love received from the Father and the Son; the Spirit must also be an active principle of love giving back the Father and Son into the still embrace of unity—love is always what unites. And, since what takes place in the divine life is the source for the dynamism of creation, it is the Holy Spirit who both gives supernatural life to us and who demands an active return of love from us to bring us back along with, and even in a sense 'beyond,' the three persons into the inner mystery of ultimate enjoyment.[59] Several passages cited above touched on this, but an important discussion in a text from the *Twelve Beguines* epitomizes Ruusbroec's teaching. He begins by contrasting 'the lofty essence' that is 'empty, without activity' with the 'fruitful nature eternally active as to the mode of the persons.' The two modes of Trinitarian production are then described: the birth of the Son from the Father, and the pouring-forth of the Holy Spirit from the two. Finally,

---

57 *Beguines* E2a:554–565. A similar text can be found in *Espousals* b1405–b1421.

58 *Mirror* E867–874.

59 Earlier scholars commented on the role of *regyratio* in Ruusbroec's thought, but the most thorough study is Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 78–96 (especially pp. 94–95) and (1998), pp. 181–184, 192–193.

the role of the Holy Spirit in both the 'outflowing' and the 'inflowing' is summarized:

> In the relations of the persons there is mutual knowledge and love, flux and reflux between the Father and the Son by means of the love of the Holy Spirit, who is the love of them both. But the oneness of the Holy Spirit, in whom the persons live and reign, is active in the outflowing, and fruitfully operating all things according to free nobility, wisdom and power of the persons. But in the inflowing of the persons the oneness of the Holy Spirit is enjoyably drawing inwards and containing the persons above distinction in an enjoyment of fathomless love that God himself is in being and in nature.[60]

This passage demonstrates that if the role of the Father as the one beginning of the entire Trinity is crucial to Ruusbroec's thought, the oneness of the Holy Spirit as the love that unites and returns all things is equally significant.[61]

In his accounts of the return of the persons to the modeless essence, Ruusbroec sometimes uses daring language. The treatment of 'union without difference' in the *Little Book of Enlightenment* not only speaks of the spirits who have been raised to this state as being melted away and annihilated (448–451) but also notes that 'There all clarity is turned back to darkness, there where the three persons give way to the essential unity and without distinction enjoy essential beatitude' (E391–393). Language about the three persons 'giving way' or 'yielding' (*wiken*) to the divine essence also occurs toward the end of the *Spiritual Espousals*. Speaking of 'the fathomless whirlpool of simplicity,' Ruusbroec says, 'The persons and everything that is living in God must give way before this . . .' (Ec218). In the treatment of the last rung of the *Seven Rungs*, Ruusbroec even says that in the fathomless abyss 'there is neither Father nor Son nor Holy Spirit, nor any creature' (E1093). What can such texts mean? Ruusbroec never uses the language of 'breaking-through' the persons of the Trinity into the silent darkness of the ground that appears in Eckhart, but does he too advocate a kind of 'God beyond God'? The key to the correct understanding of these expressions, both in Eckhart and in Ruusbroec, is in noting the dialectical character of their teaching on the Trinity. Although the two mystics express this dialectic in different ways, they both insist that the divine

60 *Beguines* E2b:36–52.

61 Cook (2000), pp. 252, 274–275, speaks of the Holy Spirit as 'overwhelming' the other two persons and 'reconstituting' God.

mystery is always both essence and activity, one and three, simple and manifold; it is active insofar as it remains essential and essential insofar as it is always supreme whirling motion. At the deepest level, the polarities of essence and activity are fused and identical, though our discursive language cannot bring this to full expression.

Given the constitutive role of the Trinity in Ruusbroec's mystical teaching, it is not surprising that one of his most important themes, the notion of the 'common life' (*ghemeyne leven*), is rooted in his understanding of the divine Tri-unity.[62] Ruusbroec's use of the term 'common' is difficult to convey in English. Since God and Christ are the source and model for the common life, however, in searching for a term that would embrace both God's 'commonness' and ours, we might suggest that the *ghemeyne leven* could be rendered as the 'generously loving life.' A text from *The Spiritual Espousals* highlights the connection between divine and human 'commonness.' Commenting on how the 'outflowing generous commonness of the divine nature' amazes the mystic, Ruusbroec says:

> The commonness of God and most of all his outflowing cause this person astonishment. For he sees the incomprehensible essence as a common enjoyment of God and of all the saints, and he sees the divine persons as a common outflowing and operating in grace and in glory, in nature and above nature, in all places and at all times, in saints and in mortals . . .[63]

In other words, the dialectical polarity of the modes of love—essential enjoyment and active giving—is rooted in the nature of God and, for that very reason, is the goal to which grace invites us. Since God is 'common' to all, we too must strive to be 'common' in all we do.

---

62 Pak (2008), pp. 137–142, suggests that Ruusbroec may have derived his notion of the 'commonness' of God's love from the Dionysian *Divine Names*, e.g., DN 2.4 (641A), 2.5 (644A), and 2.11 (649AB, 652A).

63 *Espousals* Eb932–938. The adjective *ghemeyn* and the phrase *dat ghemeyne leven* are used most often regarding the life of the perfected mystic; other passages also talk about God's common life of enjoyment and loving action. See, e.g., *Espousals* 74–75; *Enclosures* 876–881; *Beguines* 2b:660–664; *Realm* 2752–2756; and *Rungs* 37–39.

Ruusbroec's Relational Anthropology[64]

Rooted in his teaching about the Trinity, Ruusbroec's view of human nature has a similar sense of movement, a dynamism characterized by relationality and exemplarity. The human person is made '*to* the Image of God,' that is, in relation to the Word who is the exemplar of all things, and also made '*in* the Image of God,' that is, its truest being is its eidetic pre-existence, or virtual being, that is one with the Word.[65] (Only once does Ruusbroec speak of the soul as 'the image of God.')[66] The proper understanding of humanity begins from the perspective of our exemplary existence. It is also in the realm of the human as created participation in God that we complete our destiny by striving to become conscious of our higher level of existence and to make it active in our lives. Ruusbroec is not so much interested in describing or analyzing the different components of human nature in the abstract, though he does so from time-to-time, as he is in exploring humanity's nature as the being that becomes itself through relating its actions to its source.[67]

Like all Christian thinkers of antiquity and the Middle Ages, Ruusbroec found the basis of his understanding of humanity in Gn. 1:26, where the divine voice says 'Let us make man in our image and likeness.'[68] Ruusbroec's form of *imago dei* anthropology, however, demonstrates some unusual aspects that do not fit into the standard models. A good place to see these distinctive traits is in *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*, where the canon twice explicitly comments on Gn. 1:26. The first passage occurs in the midst of a digression on love. The initial proof of God's love for humanity is the fact that 'the heavenly Father has created all humans to his image and likeness. His image is his Son, the eternal Wisdom of himself.' All things live in this image in which God eternally has known and created everything. Ruusbroec moves from this basic expression of the exemplarity of the Word to a description of the special character of the relation between human nature as idea *in* the image and our created being as

64 On Ruusbroec's anthropology, see Fraling (1967), Verdeyen (1993b), Mommaers & Van Bragt (1995), pp. 99–120, and Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 101–120.

65 Eidetic pre-existence is stressed in a number of passages in the *Mirror* (e.g., 929–938, 1749–1761). Both forms of human existence, however, appear throughout Ruusbroec's writings. See, e.g., *Espousals* b1629–b1659.

66 *Mirror* 1851–1852.

67 Mommaers & Van Bragt (1995), p. 106: 'By nature, we *are* a ceaseless relationship to God.' Van Nieuwenhove (2003), p. 119: 'The most remarkable element in Ruusbroec's anthropology is his teaching that the essence of our created being is not a substance but a relation to God.'

68 For a sketch of Western anthropology, see McGinn (1985).

made *to* the image, invoking one of the dominant symbols of his anthropology, the mirror.[69] He says:

> And to this eternal image we are all made, for according to the noblest part of our soul, that is, the ground of our higher faculties, there we are made as a living eternal mirror of God (*levende eewegh spieghel gods*), whereupon God has impressed his eternal Image, and wherein no other image can ever come. The mirror always remains before the countenance of God. And therefore it is eternalized by the image it has received.

Therefore, the highest aspect of our created reality, what Ruusbroec calls our 'essential unity' (*weselijcke eenicheit*), is a living eternal mirror that is nothing less than the union between our image in the second person of the Trinity and our created being.[70] All humans possess this image in exactly the same way, and in it, Ruusbroec says, we are all one.[71] Although our created being and life hang in the image 'without intermediary as in its eternal cause,'[72] Ruusbroec insists that 'our createdness does not become God, nor (does) the image of God (become) creature; for we are created unto the image, that is, to receive the image of God. And that image is uncreated, eternal: the Son of God.'[73] It is clear that for Ruusbroec the Son alone is properly the image of the Father, as Paul avers (Col. 1:15); humans as created beings are always *ad imaginem*.

In order to grasp how the human soul functions as a mirror of God and to distinguish the different levels upon which our image-nature exists we can turn to the second treatment of Gn. 1:26 in the *Mirror*. Here Ruusbroec explains:

> In the beginning of the world, when God wanted to make the first human being in our nature, then he spoke in Trinity of Persons: 'Let us make human beings in our image and to our likeness.' . . . And he has created each person's soul as a living mirror, whereupon he has impressed the

69 On the role of the mirror in Ruusbroec, see Schultz-Zellmann (1983) and the comments of Mommaers, "Introduction," *Mirror*, pp. 23–32; also "Introduction," *Espousals*, pp. 22–27.

70 See Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 106–107, 110, and 117.

71 A later text in the *Mirror* expands on this: 'In the fountain of our life we are all united with God, but in the streams of his grace we are divided and receive everything distinctly, every one what belongs to him' (E1623–1625).

72 Ruusbroec often speaks of created essences as 'hanging' (*hanghen*) in God. See *Realm* 1897–1904.

73 These quotations and summaries are from *Mirror* E844–864. It is Ruusbroec's fixed teaching, asserted across his writings, that the soul's essence always remains distinct from God. See, e.g., *Beguines* 2a:165–171; *Rungs* 913–917; *Little Book* 424–437; *Mirror* 2101–2116; etc.

> image of his nature. And so he lives imaged in us, and we in him, for our created life is one, without intermediary, with the image and the life that we have eternally in God. And the life that we have in God is, without intermediary, one in God.[74]

Thus, the mirror symbol expresses both our continuous dependence upon God and the immediacy of the relation between God and the soul—their eternal and living unity.[75] This inhesion of one reality in another is a uniting of two things that does not compromise the essential createdness of the soul. 'For our createdness lives in the eternal image that we have in the Son of God. And our eternal image is one with the Wisdom of God and lives in our createdness. And for this the eternal birth and the flowing out of the Holy Spirit in the emptiness of our soul are always renewed without cessation.'[76] Ruusbroec, like Eckhart, teaches that the soul as image is the site of the eternal birth of the Word and the outflow of the Holy Spirit. He even (again like Eckhart) says that for this reason the soul may be described as 'the realm of God.'[77] Unlike Eckhart, however, in the midst of such discussions he continues to insist in an explicit way that this does not mean that the soul is in any way uncreated.[78]

After a discussion of the role of the gifts, the *Mirror* drives home the fact that identity and difference between God and the soul always coexist. Ruusbroec affirms:

---

74 *Mirror* E1667–1676.

75 Ruusbroec uses the expression 'living mirror' (*levende spieghel*); e.g., *Beguines* 1, 332, 338, 468, 485, 501–502, etc. Another original aspect of Ruusbroec's teaching about the human as mirror is his description of humanity as a 'double mirror' (*eenen spieghele die dobbel es*: *Espousals* b2283), reflecting God from above and sensible images from below.

76 *Mirror* E1678–1682.

77 *Mirror* 1807–1813. For Ruusbroec, 'the realm of God' can signify God himself as the goal toward which we aim, as in his first work, the *Realm*, based on the exegesis of Wis. 10:10: 'The Lord led the just back along the right ways and showed him the realm of God' (e.g., 14–18; 2484–2760; and *Beguines* 2a:650–652). Ruusbroec also shares the notion of the human person as 'God's realm' (Lk. 21:10: 'The Kingdom of God is within you'); e.g., *Espousals* a478–a486, a840–a888; b65–b72, b1434–b1440; *Mirror* 473–481, 953–968; and *Beguines* 2a:18–21, 2b:475–482, 2c:806–812. The two meanings are really one, as we are told in *Mirror* 1873–1875: 'Blessed are the seeing eyes to whom God shows his realm and his glory, that is he himself. For our heavenly Father lives in the realm of the soul as in himself.' On Eckhart's teaching on the soul as the kingdom of God, see McGinn (2001), pp. 144–147.

78 Eckhart, especially when taken to task, admitted that the soul continues to maintain its created reality, both here and in heaven. But the Dominican often preached that the soul in its deepest reality is uncreated—formulations that Ruusbroec avoids.

> The onefold eye above reason in the ground of the understanding is always open and contemplates and gazes with bare sight on the [Father's] light with the same light. There is eye to eye, mirror to mirror, image to image. With these three we are like to God and united with him, for the seeing in our onefold eye is a living mirror that God has made to his image . . .[79]

Although the Father's resplendence does not act as an intermediary, since it is both *what* we see and the means *by which* we see, and since it is 'not our eye that sees' but, rather, the divine resplendence seeing itself in us, Ruusbroec can conclude: 'the image is not the mirror, for God does not become creature.' The soul is *called* the image of God (the qualification is important) because it carries within it 'the Son of God, the eternal mirror, the Wisdom of God, wherein we all live and are eternally imaged.'[80] So, we are always fully one with God from one perspective, but not from another.

The true image of the Father, the second person of the Trinity, is the perfect and eternal mirror in which all things pre-exist, according to Ruusbroec. From all eternity, the person of the Word has known and loved humanity (the derived mirror) as the one created nature made to his image and likeness and the nature that he therefore willed to be made one with him in the union of the Incarnation. Hence, for Ruusbroec, the Incarnation was part of the divine plan from the very beginning, as is evident in the prayer that Truth speaks in the soul in the first part of the *Twelve Beguines*:

> Before all creation I have seen you in me and one with me and as myself. There I have known, loved, called, and chosen you. I have created you to my image and my likeness. I have taken on your nature and imprinted it on my image, so that you may be one with me without intermediary in the glory of my Father.[81]

The question arises, then, how our eternal pre-existence in the Word is related to our created nature as made *to* the Word's image and likeness. The answer is provided by one of the notable aspects of Ruusbroec's anthropology: his distinction of three forms of unity in created human nature.

The three unities comprising the core of human nature appear often in Ruusbroec's writings and are summarized in a text from the second book of the

79 *Mirror* E1717–1721.

80 *Mirror* 1846–1855.

81 *Beguines* E1:349–353.

Spiritual Espousals: 'We find a triple unity in all people naturally, and in good people also supernaturally,' Ruusbroec begins. 'The first and highest unity is in God, for all creatures hang in this unity with (their) being, life, and subsistence . . . This unity is in us essentially by nature, whether we are good or evil . . .' Ruusbroec points out that this unity is both *in* us, i.e., we possess it, and also *above* us, that is, it is a reflection of our eternal existence in God. 'A second union, or unity,' he then says, 'is also in us by nature, that is, the unity of the higher faculties, where they take their natural origin as to their activity: in the unity of the spirit or the mind.' This is the same unity as the former, but now considered from the viewpoint of activity rather than essence.[82] This unity, which Ruusbroec says is lower than the essence of the soul,[83] is the source of acts of 'memory and intellect and will and every faculty of spiritual activity.'[84] Finally, 'the third unity which is in us by nature is the domain of the bodily faculties in the unity of heart, the beginning and origin of the bodily life.'[85] In the second unity the soul is called 'spirit' (*gheest*) insofar as it is the source of spiritual acts; in the third unity it is properly 'soul' (*ziele*) as the animating form of the body. These three natural unions form the 'one kingdom of the soul.'[86]

Later in the second book, Ruusbroec spells out the implications of these unities in some detail (b1625–b1817). He begins by reminding his readers that 'unity of spirit' exists in two manners, essentially and actively, once again showing how the dialectic of essence and action (*wesen/werk*) structures his thinking. The innermost, most sublime, part of the soul receives 'the impress of its eternal image and of the divine brightness in bare nature.'[87] This essential unity is not identical with God, but as the created image of God into which the eternal image shines, it shares in the threefold activity of the Trinity, once again emphasizing his Trinitarianism. In his own words:

---

82 Van Nieuwenhove (2003), p. 119, puts it this way: 'In Ruusbroec's language: the active unity (i.e., the ground of the soul as source of the faculties) is the same as the essential unity (i.e., the unity of our created being and our eternal life in God in idea) or, to put it differently, the human person is essentially a relatedness to God.'

83 *Espousals* Eb1233–b1236: 'The essence of the soul is a spiritual kingdom of God, filled with divine clarity, surpassing our faculties . . . See: beneath this essence of the soul, in which God reigns, is situated the unity of our spirit . . .' (see also c135–c158).

84 Unity of spirit is treated at length on the basis of various images from Exodus in *Tabernacle*, e.g., 4:762–793, 861–877 and 5:1022–1082, 1602–1640.

85 There is a treatment of unity of heart figured by the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:1–8) in *Tabernacle* 3:25–158.

86 Quotations and summations from *Espousals* Eb35–b56.

87 *Espousals* Eb1406–1407.

> And by means of the brightness of its eternal image which shines in it essentially and personally, the spirit sinks away from itself with respect to the highest part of its natural vigor into the divine essence, and there abidingly possesses its eternal blessedness; and it flows out again with all creatures through the eternal birth of the Son, and is set in its created being by the free will of the Holy Trinity. And here it is like unto the image of the supreme Threeness and Oneness to which it has been created.[88]

This is the soul as 'untarnished mirror' (*ombesmette spiegel*), a true *imago trinitatis*. The soul's essential relationality is evident in the way in which it participates in the three basic aspects of the divine reality—abiding or hanging in God (*monê*), flowing forth from God (*proodos*), and 'returning back into God as its natural cause' (*epistrophê*: b1655–b1658). Once again, Ruusbroec insists that this unity of spirit does not make the soul divine in itself, because it receives 'the impress of its eternal image passively, insofar as it is God-like but a creature in itself' (Eb1432–b1433). Furthermore, this unity is natural, given to all humans, good or evil, by the fact of their humanity. It is the 'first cause,' or root, of all holiness and blessedness when it is energized by the grace-filled actions that make us not only the image, but also the true likeness of God.

The 'likeness to God' (*ghelijcke gods*) is the work of the second, active, aspect of unity of spirit, what Ruusbroec calls 'the domain of the higher faculties' (b1675).[89] Unity as such does not act, but it is the source of the higher faculties of the soul (memory/understanding/will) and their activities. 'In this unity,' according to Ruusbroec, 'the spirit must always be God-like by grace and virtues, or else unlike by mortal sin' (Eb1449–b1450). On the level of this aspect of unity we can act either according to nature or above nature, but unless we act on the basis of the grace given to us in and with Christ, who 'comes to us and into us with intermediary and without intermediary, that is, with gifts and above all gifts' (Eb1459–b1460), we will be alien to God and eventually damned. Ruusbroec continues with a description of the two ways in which Christ comes to us in active unity of spirit, i.e., with and without intermediary (to be discussed below). The essential point, however, is that the likeness to God consisting in love and virtue given to Adam and Eve in creation and lost by their sin

88 *Espousals* Eb1416–1422. The continuous nature of the birth of the Son and the outflow of the Holy Spirit in the essential unity of spirit is highlighted in a later text from this section: 'For in each now, God is born in us. And out of this sublime birth the Holy Spirit flows with all his gifts' (b 1774–1775).

89 'Domain' (*eyghendom*) is a technical term in Ruusbroec for the 'locus at which one is in full possession of all one's human resources.' Mommaers & Van Bragt (1995), p. 109. Ruusbroec associates it with the term 'personal being' (*persoenlijcke wesen*).

has been restored to us in Christ. The 'likeness,' then, may be defined as our ever-growing similarity to God achieved through the deifying activity given to the higher faculties through grace.[90] It is fundamentally Christological. We can only attain 'the simple essence in which God gives himself with all his richness' (b1734–b1735), that is, the eternal image of humanity in the second person of the Trinity, if we live in and by the love of the Word made flesh. Otherwise, we can indeed enter into our interior essential unity, the mirror of the eternal image, just as the false mystics do, but because we no longer relate that image to its source by acts of love and virtue, this selfish internal enjoyment will be damning rather than beatifying.

Toward the end of this consideration of the two aspects of unity of spirit, the Brabantine mystic uses the language of ground to characterize unity of spirit, the immanent source of the activities of the faculties. In a passage devoted to the importance of seeking God with a 'single, or pure, intention' (*eenvoldighe meyninghe*), that is, with what he calls 'an inward, enlightened, loving inclination of spirit' (Eb1547), he notes that such an intention 'finds God in the simple ground of its very self' (*inden eenvuldighen gronde haers selfs*: b1788).[91] Through 'the ground of a single intention' we can meet God without intermediary 'and rest with him in the ground of simplicity' (Eb1555–b1557). Ruusbroec concludes by noting how each virtuous soul 'seeks God in the ground of his spirit according to the measure of his love, both here and in eternity' (Eb1562–b1563).

Ruusbroec employs the language of the ground fairly frequently in his works.[92] Like Eckhart, he uses ground both with regard to God as the 'ground of simplicity' and also of the soul as possessing its own 'simple ground.' In book three of the *Spiritual Espousals*, for example, he says that the Father's bosom is 'our own ground and origin' (*onse eyghene gront ende onse oerspronc*: c159–160)

90 Several passages in the *Beguines* provide accounts of the relation of image and likeness. See 1:733–753; 2a:540–556; 2b:2429–2432; and 2c:10–13.

91 For the 'simple (literally: onefold) intention,' see, e.g., *Espousals* a889–a970, b102–b196, and especially b1780–b1817. For an analysis, see Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 61–66, 71–72, and 170–174; and Pak (2008), pp. 461–466.

92 In the *Tabernacle* Ruusbroec uses *grond/gront* 73 times, and in his other works about 80 times. These uses seem to be split in roughly equal numbers between indicating the depth of God and of the inner reality of the soul. These numbers do not equal those of Eckhart or Tauler but do make clear that the Brabantine mystic found the term useful in his mystical teaching. (Ruusbroec criticizes Eckhart's teaching on the ground in his attack on some passages from the Dominican's *Predigt 52* in *Beguines* 2a:82–92.) One distinctive aspect of Ruusbroec's vocabulary is his expression the 'living ground' in referring to God (e.g., *Realm* 317, 1520–1522, 2065; *Rungs* 194, 1007; Beguines 2a:494, 502; *Espousals* b1475, c212 and c226).

and that 'the simple ground of our eternal image always remains in obscurity and without mode' (Ec144–c145). Several passages speak of the relationship between our created ground and the divine ground, as when he says in the *Realm of Lovers* that all rational creatures flow into the unity of their mind in likeness to God 'in the superessence of God as their own ground.'[93] Other texts highlight the strong inner attraction between God's ground and the soul's ground.[94] Although the divine and the human grounds are intimately *related*, Ruusbroec never says that the two are *identical*; he does not use the kind of formulations regarding the fused identity of the divine and human ground that Eckhart employed. Once again, the Brabantine mystic shows himself to be more insistent than Eckhart on the necessary distinction of Creator and creature.

The three higher spiritual faculties rooted in the soul's active unity of spirit, as we have seen above, are often presented in terms of the Augustinian triad of higher powers—memory, intellect, and will.[95] Once again, however, it is instructive to see how Ruusbroec uses this theological commonplace. As passages from both the *Realm of Lovers* and the *Spiritual Espousals* make clear, Ruusbroec is interested not in analyzing memory, understanding, and will in terms of their nature as powers of the soul (i.e., faculty psychology) but, rather, in describing how the inclination and activities of the three faculties in going in and going out express our participation in the essence-activity dialectic of the divine nature. The fourth part of the *Realm* begins with a mini-treatise on the three ways to God's kingdom, paths which also express the three forms of life: the outward sensible way (the active life); a purely natural way, i.e., the path of the natural light given the soul in creation as image of God (the inner life as natural); and, finally, the supernatural way, in which the grace contained in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit enables the fallen image to regain its likeness to God. The analysis of the way of natural light (230–310) contains an account of the four lower powers of the soul (the irascible faculty, the appetitive faculty, reason, and freedom of the will), as well as a longer analysis of the three higher faculties that Ruusbroec describes as 'turned away from occupation and multiplicity and turned toward emptiness in unity' (E243–244).

Following Augustine, Ruusbroec understands the memory as the mind's self-presence, the root of all spiritual activity, analogous to the role of the Father as the source of the other persons in God. The memory can turn to outward works through the activity of the reason and freedom of the will, but

93 *Realm* E1802–1803; see also 2079–2081.

94 E.g., *Realm* 1514–22; and *Espousals* c159–c168.

95 The triad may have been mediated to Ruusbroec in part through William of St Thierry. See Verdeyen (1993b), pp. 54–57.

'elevated memory' is capable of turning inward toward the 'bareness of the essence' and becoming one with it, because memory 'has a natural inclination toward, and lust for, the simple ground of the mind' (E245–246). The intellect is also able to turn within to consider 'the emptiness of the ground,' insofar as the consideration of the dependence of creatures on God leads us to the inner awareness of the First Cause in which all things are suspended. The will, insofar as it encompasses both the memory and the intellect, functions to penetrate all the faculties and bring them 'into the unity of mind and the unity into them' (E270–271). This is the essence, or ground, of the soul that hangs immobile in God and is described as 'the termination of all the soul's activity, for no creature may work in the essence of the soul, but only God, for he is the essence of essences' (E275–277). In this early work Ruusbroec is fairly neutral about the natural way in which the three powers can move into their essence, though he notes that 'without the grace of God, it seldom is so nobly brought to fulfillment' (E281–282). In later writings, he will consider such purely natural mysticism dangerous.

In this 'naturalistic' text about the faculties, Ruusbroec does not highlight the Trinitarian dimension of the triad. In the *Spiritual Espousals* he discusses in greater detail how the action of memory, understanding, and will bring us back into the divine life of the Tri-unity. The context here is distinctly 'supernatural,' as the Brabantine mystic shows how Christ comes to us in inward practice through the three streams of grace that flow into the three higher faculties from the 'living fountain' of God (b972–b1222). This saving activity always involves both inward and outward motion. The first inflowing stream pervades all the faculties of the soul and raises them above multiplicity, leading to an elevation with respect to memory. But this inflow demands 'a going-out according to the mode of this light and this coming' (Eb854–b855), by which a person recognizes how he is sustained in the unity of his spirit. This, in turn, leads to another movement within, where the memory focuses on inner bareness, but supernaturally, 'with an eternal living inclination towards that sublime unity where the Father and the Son, in the bond of the Holy Spirit, are united with all the saints' (Eb864–b865).

Similar in and out motion activates the other two higher powers. The second stream is 'a spiritual clarity that flows forth and shines within the understanding' (Eb869). This illumination enlightens the mind above all private revelations and raptures:

> Now this enlightened person will go out and examine his state and his life within and without, as to whether he bears a perfect likeness to Christ with respect to his humanity and also with respect to the Godhead. For we have been created to the image and likeness of God. And he will lift up

> his enlightened eyes toward intelligible truth with enlightened reason and examine and behold, in creaturely fashion, the exalted nature of God and the fathomless attributes which are God.[96]

The enlightened person beholds not only the modeless divine mystery but also the attributes of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (b1045–1082). Such a person is drawn into astonishment, not only by the contemplation of the attributes of the Trinity but especially by the 'commonness of God,' that is, how God generously shares his being with all things, as noted above. Finally, 'the third stream enkindles the will like a fire and devours and consumes everything into unity and flows over and through all the faculties of the soul with rich gifts and particular nobility, and it produces in the will a subtle spiritual love without labor' (Eb957–b960). This stream, Ruusbroec concludes, causes an outflowing of virtues in all the faculties, but the outflowing is inseparable from the inflow, because 'the fountain of grace always demands a flowing-back into the same ground from which that flow issues' (Eb971–b972).

Ruusbroec's understanding of memory-intellect-will as a created participation in the inward-outward movement of the Trinity is a key aspect of his anthropology. At times he expresses this dynamism in another form, using an intramental triad of his own making to present the soul's nature as an image of the Trinitarian God—essential bareness, higher reason, and the spark of the soul. In the *Mirror* he provides a short summary of this alternate perspective.[97] These three attributes of the soul are one in nature, but threefold in operation. 'The unimaged essential bareness' makes us like and even 'united with the Father and his divine nature.'[98] In the higher reason of the soul 'we receive the Son of God, the eternal Truth,' and become one with him. The 'spark of the soul' (*vonke der zielen*), i.e., 'the natural inward inclination of the soul toward its origin,' is where we receive the Holy Spirit and become one spirit and one love with God.[99] These unions are found in us all by nature, but they are hidden to sinners. 'If we want to feel and experience the realm of God that is hidden in us, then we must have a virtuous life inside and a well-ordered life outside in true charity, following Christ in every way' (E896–898) This likeness, however, is just another way to express the triad of memory-intellect-

96 *Espousals* Eb883–b889.

97 *Mirror* 938–969.

98 On 'essential bareness,' see also *Mirror* 2062–2066 and *Realm* 1077–1078.

99 Eckhart identified the spark with the intellect, whereas Ruusbroec locates it in the will (e.g., *Mirror* 945–949, 1878–1879, 2079–2081; *Espousals* a122–a124; *Beguines* 1:857–859; and *Realm* 1531–1541.

will: 'Through the supernatural likeness we have with God in grace and in virtues, our memory is elevated in unimaged bareness and our understanding in onefold truth, and our will in divine freedom' (E905–907). In this way we can regain the image and likeness in which God first created Adam.

In conclusion, we should remember that Ruusbroec's complex anthropology had a fundamentally practical purpose—it was aimed at showing fallen humans how to regain their true relatedness to God. Being reformed to the fullness of the image and likeness of God, that is, the Father's one and only Image, becomes possible only through that Image made man in Christ Jesus, who provides us with both the means and the example to realize who we really are. Ruusbroec expressed this message in concrete fashion in his analogy of the golden penny found in the *Seven Enclosures*.[100] Here he compares the four modes of the exercise of the interior life with 'a penny of fine gold with which one buys and acquires eternal life.' The penny is human nature. It should be examined under three headings: its authenticity, its weight, and its minted face. If we love God for himself alone, the penny is of real gold; and if all other loves are subordinated to this, then the weight is sufficient. The minted face of the coin provides Ruusbroec with the opportunity to summarize his anthropology of the image and its restoration in Christ. 'The blank side of the coin is the essence of our soul whereupon God has imprinted his image' (E223–224). By turning inward in faith, hope, and love we can enrich the blank side of the coin with its internal Trinitarian image by means of our 'indwelling of God.' But the reverse side must also be enriched 'with our virtues and with the life and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ' (E230–231). In other words, eternal life is gained by restoring to God the penny of human nature that has been conformed to Christ on the outside and restored to its Trinitarian likeness on the reverse inside.

The Mystical Path

While mysticism is a modern term, we can legitimately call Ruusbroec a mystic in the sense that his message is centered on how to attain a deeper sense of the transforming consciousness of the presence of God. For Ruusbroec, God is present essentially within each human by reason of our dependence on the divine Tri-unity, and God should also be present superessentially by the action

100 *Enclosures* 223–257. The penny as a symbol for the soul's relationship to God is also found in Tauler's *Predigt 37* (ed. Vetter, pp. 142–143). There has been discussion of the connection of the two mystics on this point, although the image was also used by earlier writers. See Reypens (1964).

of grace leading us back to share in his essential love.[101] Ruusbroec was a student of the states of consciousness, ordinary and extraordinary, that characterize the mystical life. He was also the creator of new ways of describing the stages of progress to God and the forms of union on the mystical path. Few thinkers, even in the 14th century which was obsessed with mystical heresy, analyzed the differences between true and false mysticism with more insight. Like many late medieval mystics, Ruusbroec also emphasized the universality of the call to deeper contact with God. The Christian faith, the life of prayer and the sacraments, the practice of the virtues, and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit all summon believers to pursue the goal of union with God.[102] Although Ruusbroec commented on some of the unusual forms of mystical consciousness, such as ecstasy, visions, and spiritual drunkenness, he insisted that the core of mystical transformation resided not in some unusual sensible experience but in coming to a deeper share in the love that is the Trinity. As Louis Dupré put it: 'The mystical life does not consist in abrupt alteration of consciousness, but rather in an evermore intensively conscious recurrence of the same divine rhythm.'[103]

The fundamental error of false forms of mysticism that Ruusbroec attacked throughout his life was prideful self-reliance on nature in its fallen state. Therefore, the starting point of the true superessential mystical path is humble recognition that only through the redeeming action of Jesus Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit that He makes available to us in the Church and its sacraments does the way back to God become open.[104] As a passage from the *Little Book of Enlightenment* puts it: 'For no one ascends to heaven through his own power save the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must unite ourselves to him by the means of grace and virtues and Christian faith, so that we may ascend with him there where he has gone before' (E482–486). For Ruusbroec, it is impossible to separate the Christological and the Trinitarian

101 See the summary of the two forms of indwelling in De Letter (1961), pp. 52–53.

102 The *Mirror*, although written for a woman religious, notes that God has freely redeemed 'all in common' and left them the gift of his sacraments (32–35). The work is based on the progression of three states of the Christian life (dying to sin, inner virtuous living, elevated dying in love into union), and Ruusbroec observes that 'when these three states come together in one person, then he lives according to the dearest will of God' (104–106). As Paul Mommaers points out in the "Introduction" to the critical edition (p. 18), this means that the mystical life has no other basis than what has been done for all and is therefore open to all.

103 Dupré (1984), p. 53. See also his comment on p. 63: 'The recurring rhythm of spiritual life is not a repetition; its ascending spiral never returns to the same point.'

104 On Ruusbroec's Christology, see Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 121–156; also the remarks of Mommaers in the "Introduction" to *Mirror*, pp. 48–56.

dimensions, because it is only in and through Christ that the mutual and dynamic love of the Trinity becomes available to us. Christ both reveals and mediates Trinitarian love. Some aspects of Ruusbroec's doctrine of Christ have been touched on above; an investigation of one key passage will help flesh out this aspect of his thought.

In the midst of his late treatise the *Mirror*, Ruusbroec provides an excursus on four points, or proofs, of God's eternal love for humanity (881–1039). The first, mentioned above, is our creation in the image and likeness of God. The remaining three deal with redemption in Christ. The second point is that the Son of God 'has assumed human nature out of love and impressed upon it his personality' (E833–835). The third is Christ's death by which he redeems us with his precious blood and washes away our sins, while the fourth point is his giving us his flesh and blood as food and drink in the Eucharist.

The explanation of the second point (970–996) is a summary of Ruusbroec's theology of the Incarnation, stressing the humility of the Godman in taking on human flesh. Ruusbroec has a functional Christology. The key to his view is the ancient adage found in his statement that 'He [i.e., Christ] remained God and became human so that humans might become God' (E920). Ruusbroec, however, did not think that Christ assumed universal humanity so that everything that can be said of the Son of God can also be said of all humans. A later text from the *Mirror* makes this clear: 'Although the Son of God has assumed our nature and has made himself human, he has not made us God' (E1803–1804). In keeping with his functional Christology, Ruusbroec is interested not in speculation on the ontological constitution of Christ but in the practical consequences of the love poured out upon fallen humans through the instrumentality of the Incarnate Savior: 'But if we are to be clothed with him there [i.e., in the divine person], that must be through his grace: that we love him so much that we can renounce ourselves and transcend our created personality: thus we are united with his person, the eternal truth' (E927–930). As a text from the *Spiritual Espousals* emphasizes, 'The reason why God became man was his incomprehensible love and the neediness of all men' due to Adam's Fall (Ea166–a167). Therefore the economy of redemption is essentially a cycle of love given and returned—God's infinite love for us and our giving back love to him.[105]

The supreme and paradigmatic moment in the cycle of love is expressed in the third point, Christ's death on the cross. The *Mirror* emphasizes the role of the Trinity in this proof of love: 'This was not enough to forgive the sin for us,

105 Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 122, 132, 136–138, and 140–145, emphasizes the congruity between Ruusbroec's understanding of Trinitarian love as a *do ut des* dynamism and his understanding of redemption.

for the Father wanted to requite the sin according to justice. And therefore he delivered his Son to die for that sin. And the Son was obedient to him unto death. And the Holy Spirit fulfilled that labor in love.'[106] Ruusbroec's highlighting of the role of Christ's blood in washing us free from sin fits in with late medieval fascination with redeeming blood,[107] and his identification of Christ's people with the water that is mingled with the divine blood in the chalice at Mass introduces the fourth proof of love: Christ's continual feeding of believers in the Eucharist.

Several passages in the *Twelve Beguines* make it clear that Christ's nourishing of believers in the sacrament is the source and motive power for all three stages of the return to God. Toward the beginning of the work Christ addresses the loving soul with these words:

> Now mark, beloved, what I have done for you besides. I have given and left for you my flesh and my living blood as food and drink and in a penetrating heavenly savor, after every mode a person can desire, taste, and feel. I have fed and filled your desire and your sense life [i.e., the active life] with my tortured glorious body. I have fed and filled your love and your rational life [i.e., the inner life] with my spirit and with all my gifts and all my merits in which I was pleasing to my Father. I have fed and filled your contemplation and the exaltation of your spirit [i.e., the contemplative life] with my person that you may live in me and I in you, God and man, in likeness of virtues and unity of enjoyment. My Father and I have filled the world with our Spirit, with our gifts and with our sacraments, insofar as each person desires and needs them.[108]

Thus it is evident that Ruusbroec viewed the mystical path as essentially Christocentric and sacramental in its origin, as well as in all its development.

In the *Spiritual Tabernacle*, Ruusbroec's allegorical exposition of the Exodus account of the tabernacle and its various furnishings, priests, and rituals, the canon identifies the golden candlestick (Ex. 25:31–40) with Christ's humanity.[109] Because Christ is our head and we are his members in the body of the Church, we are obliged to be like him in every way possible. Shortly

106 *Mirror* E936–939. As Van Nieuwenhove (2003) argues (pp. 139–146), this text and others show that Ruusbroec adapted a form of Anselmian satisfaction theory implying that the loving obedience shown by the Son in the passion was necessary to restore our skewed relationship to God.

107 On late medieval understandings of Christ's blood, see Bynum (2002).

108 *Beguines* 1:384–396. See Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 133–135.

109 *Tabernacle* 5:220–77.

before this passage, Ruusbroec summarizes the union of perfect divinity and humanity in the person of the Word—'Nevertheless each nature remained in itself all that it was, for the divinity could not become humanity, nor humanity divinity. And each nature of both was his own nature, for he is truly God and man.' By the power of grace we can begin to renounce our own person and nature and to imitate human nature insofar as it has been deified in Christ. 'Thus,' he concludes, 'can we be transformed by eternal truth, which is Christ himself. And thus he will live in us and we in him.'[110] This transformation takes place through our participation in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out upon Christ's humanity, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah (Is. 11:1–3) and symbolized by the seven forms of decorative furnishing that adorn the golden candlestick. 'And he also has these seven gifts,' says Ruusbroec, 'as seven eyes with which he recognized and felt, according to his humanity, all virtues with distinction. For each gift makes one especially recognize and feel the ground of one of those virtues which may grow out of this capital virtue. And therefore, all the seven gifts make one recognize and feel how the Spirit of God moves the human spirit, in seven manners, to all virtues that a person can practice' (E5:194–201).

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude, and fear of the Lord) had long been an important theme of Christian mysticism. Ruusbroec's stress on the seven gifts allowed him to show how the path to union was both Christological, rooted in our growing imitation of Christ, and Pneumatological, achieved by our participation in the love that is the Holy Spirit, the engine of our return to essential enjoyment in the divine essence. The *Spiritual Tabernacle* introduces one of the longer expositions of the nature of the gifts and their role in the life of the believer.[111] Discussions in three other works, the *Realm of Lovers*, the *Spiritual Espousals*, and the *Seven Rungs*, also integrate the action of the gifts in the progress of the soul toward superessential union in a detailed manner.[112]

Many mystics made use of descriptions of stages or itineraries to help structure their teaching about the journey to God. The purpose of such itineraries is primarily pedagogical; hence mystics have frequently employed different formulations, even in the same work. The most popular of such itineraries is the triple pattern of purification, enlightenment, and perfection or union, pio-

110 *Tabernacle* E5:156–162.

111 The seven gifts are discussed in *Tabernacle* 5:278–599.

112 The treatment in the *Rungs* 415–444 is relatively brief. In *Espousals* b1818–b2157, Ruusbroec provides a longer analysis of the role of the seven gifts in 'meeting the Bridegroom.' The longest treatment is in the *Realm*, where, after a brief introduction of the theme (311–331), Ruusbroec spends most of the fourth part of the work in an analysis of the gifts (584–2483).

neered by Origen and spread by the Dionysian corpus. Ruusbroec has his own version of this, but he also uses a number of other mystical itineraries across his writings. In his first work, the *Realm of Lovers*, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are correlated with the nine choirs of angels by doubling the gifts of fortitude and counsel, thus providing a nine-stage ascent to God. In another early work, the *Sparkling Stone*, he adopts a fourfold analysis of personal relationship to God: the progression from hirelings, to faithful servants, through secret friends, to finish with the highest stage, hidden sons.[113] In two late works, the *Seven Enclosures* and the *Seven Rungs*, he mixes patterns based on seven with the dominant itinerary that appears throughout his works—a threefold distinction of the stages of spiritual growth: (1) the active life, (2) the interior life, and (3) the contemplative life.[114] In considering this aspect of his mystical teaching, it is important to remember that while there is an element of progression in this pattern, given Ruusbroec's dynamic sense of spiritual movement up and down and out and in, there is also an important role for concomitance—all three forms of life remain necessary and interactive.

Ruusbroec's best known presentation of the three stages of the mystical life is found in the *Spiritual Espousals*, one of the most systematic presentations of Christian mysticism. The structure of the treatise shows how the Brabantine canon sought to root his teaching in Scripture. Taking the text in Mt. 25:6 as his organizing motif ('See/ the Bridegroom is coming/ go out/ to meet him'), Ruusbroec analyzes how these four phrases reveal the characteristics of the three stages. The first stage, the active life, consists in the individual's inner struggle to overcome sin and his outward life of service to others. In this life, 'see' is interpreted as indicating the three things that are necessary for spiritual vision: 'the light of God's grace, a will freely turned to him, and a conscience unstained by mortal sin' (Ea60–a62). The 'Bridegroom's coming' is read as Christ's advents in past, present, and future (a179–a466). In his coming in the Incarnation, the Savior teaches us the fundamental virtues of humility, charity, and patient endurance of suffering. His present coming in grace and the sacraments prepares us for his final coming on Judgment Day. 'Going out' means that we must imitate Christ in the practice of virtues. 'This going out must take

113 The discussion of the four kinds of persons is found in *Stone* 265–640. At the beginning of the treatise, Ruusbroec sets forth the fourfold distinction in a rather different way, distinguishing the good man, the spiritual man, the contemplative man, and the 'common outflowing man' (*Stone* 1–138). Both Cassian (*Collationes* XI, 7) and Bernard of Clairvaux (e.g., *Sermo de diversis* 3) had made use of a triple pattern of *servus-mercenarius-filius*. Ruusbroec seems to be original in adding the 'secret friends.'

114 These three forms of life structure the *Espousals* and the *Tabernacle*. They are also incorporated into the sevenfold patterns of the *Realm*, the *Enclosures*, and the *Rungs* and are mentioned in the *Stone* 1–138, and the *Mirror* 99–108.

place in three ways: we must go out to God and to ourselves and to our neighbors, and this must be done with charity and justice' (Ea408–a410). This long section (a467–a888) includes a treatment of the essential virtues and an analysis of how the seven beatitudes help overcome the seven deadly sins. Finally, in the fourth section of the first part, Ruusbroec explores the three ways in which we 'meet him' in the active life (a889–a1022): by directing the mind to God, by neither thinking about nor loving anything as much as God, and by resting in God with great ardor above all creatures. This final stage marks the transition to the interior, or properly mystical, life.

The *Spiritual Espousals* concentrates on this second part of the itinerary, a sign that Ruusbroec felt that the majority of his readers would profit most from a detailed account of this stage.[115] For the Brabantine mystic, the interior or spiritual life might be described as the expressible stage of mystical consciousness, whereas the final contemplative life remains essentially inexpressible. In order to 'see' supernaturally in inner practice, three things are necessary, according to Ruusbroec. The first is a higher form of divine enlightenment than that found in the active life; the second is 'a stripping away of all alien images and busyness of heart, so that with respect to creatures, the person can be free, unassailed by images, detached, and empty' (Eb24–b26). Finally, all the bodily and spiritual powers must be gathered together in a free and total conversion of the will to God, 'so that the rational creature may supernaturally obtain and possess the lofty unity of God' (Eb29–b30). Ruusbroec explains this in terms of his doctrine of the three unities of the human person analyzed above (b41–b159).

The second and third parts of the interior life, illustrated by the scriptural phrases 'the Bridegroom is coming' and 'go out,' are treated together (b160–b1602). The presentation is based on Ruusbroec's basic law of motion: that is, the movement of the Bridegroom *coming into* us must be matched by our own *going out* to him and to others. Christ comes into the three unities that constitute human nature. He first comes into the heart as the unity of all the corporeal powers, especially those of appetite and desire, drawing them upward to attain unity with God. In a nobler way, Christ flows into the soul's higher powers of memory, understanding, and will, exacting 'a flowing-out and flowing-back with all of this richness into the same ground whence the flowing comes' (Eb159–b160). Third, there is an 'inward stirring or touch in the unity of spirit' (Eb165), a coming that produces 'the innermost and highest way of inward life' (Eb168–b169). The notion of the divine 'touch' introduces one of the character-

115 The active life (*Espousals* a) takes up 1022 lines in the critical edition, while the interior life (*Espousals* b) has 2584 and the contemplative life (*Espousals* c) only 259.

istic features of Ruusbroec's mysticism.[116] As he begins the exposition of these forms of inward-outward movement, culminating in the touching of the soul in its deepest unity, Ruusbroec warns that those who have not experienced it will not be able to understand him.

The wealth of detail that the Brabantine mystic lays out in his treatment of the coming in and going out of the interior life cannot be fully explored here. In terms of the structure of the exposition, the presentation is easy enough to follow, despite his digressions. Christ's coming into the heart involves the modes of special mystical gifts that affect the inner person and may even flow over into the outward senses. Ruusbroec enumerates four. The first (b212–b358) is an inward impulse which enlightens and enkindles the heart and the faculties, which is illustrated by the examples of boiling water and the sun's action on the earth in springtime. The second mode (b360–b459) is described as a superabundance of consolation and sweetness that gives rise to 'a blissfulness of heart and of all the bodily faculties in such a way that a person believes himself to be interiorly enfolded by a divine embrace of affective love' (Eb329–b331). Such delight gives rise to 'spiritual inebriation' (b395), which, Ruusbroec says, can produce strange behavior in the mystic, such as running, jumping, dancing, and clapping hands out of sheer joy. This account of ecstatic gifts shows that Ruusbroec, like his contemporaries Richard Rolle and Henry Suso, had experience with the somatic effects of mystical states but also that he did not give them great value. Rather, he insists that such experiences come at the beginning of a person's conversion from the world and can often prove misleading (b423–b438). The third mode of Christ's coming, above any delight or savor of divine joy, is described as an interior invitation to union with God over everything the soul has ever experienced. This invitation, claims Ruusbroec, 'is a shining of Christ, the eternal sun, within, and it produces such great delight and joy in the heart and makes the heart open so wide that one can scarcely close it. Thus this person is wounded within, in his heart, and he feels the lacerations of love' (Eb422–b425).[117] In analyzing the motif of the 'wound of love' (Sg. 2:4) as a source of both pain and pleasure (b495–b527), Ruusbroec reminds us of comparable accounts, such as that of Teresa of Avila.[118] His subsequent comments on other mystical charisms, such as revelations, visions, raptures, illuminations, and the ecstatic cry called the *iubilus*, shows that he was aware

116 Reypens (1938a).

117 On the role of experiences of illumination in Ruusbroec's mysticism, see Pak (2008), pp. 38–67.

118 Teresa of Avila's account of her reception of the wound of love is found in her *Life*, ch. 29. Ruusbroec treats the wound of love in a number of other places. See, e.g., *Realm* 1094–1103.

of these unusual modes of consciousness and mystical gifts among his contemporaries. Ruusbroec's conclusion is a judicious application of the 'discernment of spirits' that had become so important in the 14th century. 'Such experiences,' he says, 'may be natural, or they may come from the devil or from some good angel. For this reason, they should be relied on only insofar as they are in accord with Holy Scripture and with the truth.'[119]

The fourth mode of Christ's coming into our heart in the interior life and our response to it (b668–b890) is reminiscent of John Tauler, who also insisted that after initial bliss God often moves the soul higher into a stage of abandonment and dereliction.[120] Here the mystic loses all inward joy and consolation and may be deprived of earthly goods and the esteem of others. Self-doubt and despair loom over such a soul, who is now called to 'make an inward joy of all suffering and of all forsakenness and offer himself into the hands of God and be glad that he may suffer for the honor of God.'[121] Ruusbroec concludes that 'If he conducts himself rightly in this mode, he will never have tasted joy so deep' (Eb624–b625). This lesson on the need for obedience and resignation is the height of the first coming of Christ into the heart of the interior person. Ruusbroec closes this part with an account of how Christ is our model for the proper living of these four modes (b891–b971).

The second form of Christ's coming in inward practice is his entry into the three higher powers of the soul (b972–b1404). The fullness of God's grace flows into the inner person, both essentially (*weselijcke*), 'indwelling like a brimful fountain' in the unity of spirit, and actively (*werkelijcke*), in its outflowing into each of the faculties (b977–b982). The first stream that flows out of the unity of spirit unifies all the lower and higher powers into a state of simplicity that raises the memory above all distractions and focuses it on 'bareness,' giving unity of spirit a loving inclination toward the supreme oneness of the Trinity (b985–b1007). The second stream (b1008–b1110), 'a spiritual clarity which flows forth and shines within the understanding,' is described at more length. This light is not so much a matter of special revelations and inner visions but, rather, an enlightenment about what God wants for us and for others, as well as grace to 'examine, see and behold in creaturely fashion the exalted nature of God and the fathomless attributes that are in God' (Eb887–b889), that is, the properties of the Trinity. The third stream (b1111–b1222) flows out of the unity of spirit and 'enkindles the will like a fire and devours and consumes everything into unity and flows over and through all the faculties of the soul with rich gifts

119 *Espousals* b588–b593. There is a considerable literature on the role of discernment of spirits in late medieval mysticism. For an introduction, see McGinn (2005), pp. 73–78.

120 On Tauler's notion of dereliction, see McGinn (2005), pp. 286–289.

121 On dereliction in Ruusbroec's mysticism, see Reypens (1938b).

and particular nobility, and it produces in the will a subtle spiritual love without labor' (Eb957–b960). It is this third stream of love that empowers the inward and outward movement that characterizes the higher stages of Ruusbroec's mysticism. Flowing out in love to God and humans is based upon flowing into essential enjoyment in God—'the fountain of grace always demands a flowing-back into the same ground from which that flow issues' (Eb971–b972).[122] The final section of the analysis of how Christ comes into the higher powers of the soul is a discussion of how the Savior serves as the model for giving ourselves to everyone in 'this common mode' (*dese ghemeyne wise*: b1262–b1404).[123]

The third and last of the comings of the Bridegroom is his entry into the unity of spirit itself and what form of going out such a coming invites as a response from the soul (b1405–b1602). Ruusbroec begins by underlining another important aspect of his anthropology, namely, that 'the sublime superessential unity of the divine nature' lives within 'the bare essence of our spirit' (b1405–b1408), above even unity of spirit. 'The essential being of the soul,' which Ruusbroec describes as 'God's kingdom' where the Trinity dwells, moves the unity of spirit and all the faculties, both naturally and supernaturally, by means of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. When a soul has attained peace in its unity of spirit, it is drawn up to flow back 'into the same ground and into the sublime unity of God from which all flowing comes' (Eb1251–b1252). From God's interior work in our unity of spirit and our own burning love for him 'springs forth the third coming of Christ in inner practice. And this is an inward stirring or touch of Christ by his divine brightness in the innermost of our spirit' (Eb1259–b1261). Ruusbroec compares this touch to the vein or inner spring that is the source of the three streams that flow into the higher powers. Touch is a purely passive gift of God—'Here no one works but God alone, out of free goodness, which is the cause of all our virtues and our blessedness' (Eb1271–b1273). It is above activity and ordinary reason, but is felt in 'enlightened reason' and the 'faculty of loving.'

Ruusbroec used many sensory terms to describe God's action, especially the term 'touch' (*gherinen*), though 'feeling,' 'gazing,' and 'tasting' language is also frequent. He does not usually speak of 'spiritual senses,' and, despite a certain tension in his language about our sensing God (more correctly, how we *use* such language), Ruusbroec seems close to Hadewijch and some other late

122 At this point Ruusbroec introduces a discussion (b1136–b1222) of four modes of going out before describing the errors of the false mystics (b1223–b1261).

123 This section treats the role of the Eucharist as Christ's common gift to all good people (b1322–b1365) and discusses how devotion to Christ's passion sometimes even produces the stigmata (b1377–b1394).

medieval mystics in employing sensory language about God's action on humans in a holistic way. In the most general sense, touch is another name for the experience of God's gift of love: 'God's love for us is a spiritual stirring or touch in which he accords his grace and his gifts to each one, as it will profit each the best to live according to them in virtue.'[124] Kurt Ruh describes this stirring as 'like an electric spark that makes the soul receptive of the supernatural.'[125] Especially in the *Spiritual Espousals*, Ruusbroec makes it clear that touch pertains to God's active and operative presence in inner practice, both with regard to the action of the Holy Spirit and to Christ's coming into our unity of spirit: 'This is the inward stirring or touch of Christ by his divine brightness in the innermost of our spirit' (Eb1260–b1261). Therefore, touch is a grace, not something we possess by nature; it is passively received by the faculty of love and by enlightened reason, commanding them to deeper knowing and loving of God.[126] The fact that touch is felt in the unity of spirit might seem to indicate that Ruusbroec adhered to a conception of interior sensation as distinct from exterior, but his teaching is more nuanced. 'Touch' affects the entire person, something that is evident from the way in which he speaks of the overflowing of the interior touch into the lower powers and its flowing out in the works of love to others.[127] In the *Spiritual Espousals* he says that the hungry spirit imagines that it is 'eating and swallowing God, but by God's touch it is itself constantly being swallowed, and it fails in all its activity and itself becomes love, above all activity.' Nevertheless, this unification of the higher faculties in the unity of spirit is 'the origin of charity and all virtues' (Eb1367–b1371). Another text puts it more concisely: 'This is why we are touched, every moment anew, so that at every moment we may be newer and more God-like in virtues' (b2136–b2137). Thus the touch partakes of the inner-outer movement rooted in the life of the Trinity that characterizes all Ruusbroec's thinking.[128] 'Touch' is the place where the overflowing love of the Trinity meets us; it is the point at which there is mutual contact with God: we are not only

124 *Beguines* E1:559–562. This late treatise has a number of passages on the touch and its relation to other divine gifts. See 1:556–560, 1:572–576, 1:596–604, 1:762–765, 1:790–795, and 2b:792–794.

125 Ruh (1999), p. 63.

126 The treatment of touch in *Espousals* b1462–b1527 forms a good summary, but there are subsequent discussions in b1548–b1580, b2002–b2005, b2136–b2143, and b2213–b2227. For treatments of touching elsewhere, see, e.g., *Realm* 1492–1501, 1515–1526, 1559–1561, 1880–1891, and 2068–2070; *Enclosures* 634–645 and 784–791; *Rungs* 1104–1111; and *Stone* 720–748.

127 See especially *Little Book* 304–328 and 524–532.

128 On the relationship of the touch to the inward and outward flow of the Trinity, e.g., *Stone* 721–734.

touched by God but we also can touch him in return in the 'strife of love.'[129] The touch is therefore the final form of mediation before superessential union. As he puts it in the *Mirror*:

> God's touch and our secret interior striving constitute the last intermediary between ourselves and God, in which we become united with him in a mutual encounter of love. The living spring of the Holy Spirit is where we become united with God, and it has a welling vein of water, namely, God's touch, which is so strong and powerful that we cannot break though it to the abyss of God's fathomless love.[130]

Touching and tasting, thought of as lower senses in traditional medieval physiology, were given a higher status by many late medieval mystics. For Ruusbroec, they are aspects of 'feeling' (*ghevoelen*), another key term in his vocabulary. While it would be going too far to think of Ruusbroec as just a 'phenomenologist' of mystical experience, it is clear that his mystical theology had an important role for analyses of feeling. In the *Sparkling Stone*, speaking of the possession of the superessential love that is the Holy Spirit, he says:

> This possession is a simple unfathomable taste of all that is good and of life eternal. And in this taste we are swallowed up above reason and without reason in the deep stillness of the Godhead, which is never moved. That this is true we can feel by experience (*dat machmen met ghevoelne weten*), and in no other way, for no other practice can reach how it is, or where, or what.[131]

Feeling is an analogous term for Ruusbroec—he explicitly distinguishes three forms of feeling (bodily, spiritual, and divine) to match his threefold view of human nature.[132] Because he is willing to speak of feeling as more than just bodily sensation, however, and because in his view the human person was constituted by three interdependent unities in constant interaction, his mysticism has a decidedly integrative and holistic perspective.

Our response to this touch, as set forth in the *Spiritual Espousals*, is described as 'the innermost practice of which a creature is capable, in a creaturely

129 *Espousals* b1558–b1564. For other texts on the reciprocity of the touch, see *Mirror* 1894–1902, and 2058–2061, and *Enclosures* 721–745.

130 *Mirror* 1904–09, transl. Wiseman (1985), p. 240.

131 *Stone* E476–478. The necessity for 'feeling' and the impossibility of knowing or describing the highest mode of union with God are also emphasized in *Stone* 75–85.

132 On the three forms of feeling, see, e.g., *Little Book* 323–328.

fashion, in created light' (Eb1284–b1285). The touch moves both the knowing and loving powers, commanding 'the understanding to know God in his brightness' and 'drawing and inviting the faculty of loving to enjoy God without intermediary' (Eb1288–b1289). The light of created reason fails here, but enlightened reason presses on. Nevertheless, only love can enter in. In an important passage, Ruusbroec, like a number of other late medieval mystics, stresses the failure of reason and the supremacy of love:

> There [in the soul's ground], the brightness of God shines so greatly that reason and all understanding fail to go further and must suffer and yield to the incomprehensible brightness of God. But when the spirit feels this in its ground, even though reason and understanding fail in the face of the divine brightness and remain outside, before the door, nevertheless, the faculty of loving wishes to go further; for, like understanding, it has been compelled and invited; but it is blind and it wants enjoyment, and enjoyment lies more in tasting and feeling than in understanding. For this reason love goes in while understanding remains outside.[133]

At this point Ruusbroec is inspired to a powerful passage on the nature of mystical love (*minne*).[134] The movement of the amorous faculty to find enjoyment in God, he says, cannot be anything other than an 'eternal hunger' (*eewich hongher*), because the finite spirit can never reach repletion in its pursuit of the infinite God. This eternal hunger is an endless pursuit of God that is a paradoxical fusion of satisfaction and desire.[135] 'A created vessel,' Ruusbroec continues, 'cannot contain an uncreated good; this is why there is an eternal hungry avidity here, and God overflows everything but is always uncontained.' Despite huge meals known only to the one who has experienced them, 'full satiety in enjoyment is the one dish that is missing and this is why the hunger is always renewed' (Eb1321–b1325). In a manner similar to Hadewijch,

133 *Espousals* Eb1305–b1313. For the translation of the final phrase (*Hier omme wilt minne voert daer verstannisse buyten blivet*), I follow Wiseman (1985), p. 114.

134 For *minne* in *Espousals*, see Wiseman (1984), Zhang (1998) and Cook (2000), especially chap. 5.

135 The notion of *epektasis*, often citing Phil. 3:13 as a proof-text, first appears in Gregory of Nyssa. Ruusbroec could not have known Gregory's works, but this theme is also present in Bernard of Clairvaux, as well as in Hadewijch and Eckhart, who both used the language of eternal hunger. See Duclow (2000). One way in which Ruusbroec expresses *epektasis* is by combining the verbs *crighen* (*voertcrighen*) and *ontbliven*, i.e., 'craving' and 'lacking'; e.g., *Espousals* b1532–b1538; *Stone* 554–555. For more on *epektasis* in Ruusbroec, see Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 174–177.

Ruusbroec goes on to speak of the overwhelming power of the touch of love present in this eternal hunger. He puts it in terms of violence: 'In this storm of love (*storme van minnen*) two spirits contend: the Spirit of God and our spirit.' The Holy Spirit inclines toward us and grants us the touch of love, while by God's impulse activating our faculty of love we press into God and touch him. The effect is a violent mutual lovers' embrace and flowing together:

> From these two movements there arises the struggle of love, for in this most profound meeting, in this most intimate and ardent encounter, each spirit is wounded by love. These two spirits, that is, our spirit and God's spirit, cast a radiant light upon one another and each reveals to the other its countenance. This makes the two spirits incessantly strive after one another in love. Each demands of the other what it is, and each offers to the other and invites it to accept what it is. This makes the lovers lose themselves in one another.[136]

But, insists Ruusbroec, such a state of enjoyment cannot last. Indeed, the more fervent the love that captivates the spirit, the more quickly it will be impelled to fall back into activity, just as the supreme enjoyment of the persons of the Trinity in the divine essence is the source of all its fruitful activity within and without the divine realm. At the close, Ruusbroec reminds the reader that as high as this state is, because the divine touch is a created intermediary, it is lower than what will take place in the divine light of the contemplative state.

In the fourth part of the treatment of the interior life, Ruusbroec discusses what it means 'to meet him' by analyzing various modes of union with God, a theme he will return to later in his *Little Book of Enlightenment*. The treatment is long (b1603–b2584), but the gist is clear. At the level of the interior life, Ruusbroec speaks of three forms of union—one natural and two supernatural. There is the natural meeting with God without intermediary, because God is always directly, if obscurely, present in the depths of the soul. The two supernatural meetings or unions with God realized in the interior life are first the 'meeting with intermediary,' which constitutes the soul's regaining of its likeness to God through grace and its actions, and second the 'meeting without intermediary,' which Ruusbroec understands as our being taken up into the activity that constitutes the persons of the Trinity.

Every meeting with Christ contains two kinds of reciprocal motion: he comes from above while we come from below, and he comes from within us

136 *Espousals* b1562–b1569, transl. Wiseman (1985), p. 115.

outward as we come from outward to within (b1618–b1622).[137] On the level of the interior life, meeting with Christ takes place both with and without intermediary (the highest union, union without difference, is assigned to the contemplative life). The essence of human nature as created to the image of God means that the spirit always possesses God *essentially* and without intermediary in its bare nature (b1629–b1669). This form of natural union, as we have seen in looking at Ruusbroec's anthropology, grounds the union in *activity* of the soul's higher powers. But on the level of action, Ruusbroec says that the spirit 'must always be either like God by means of grace and virtue or else unlike God because of mortal sin' (Eb1449–b1450). This observation sets up the treatment of two forms of active supernatural union discussed in the remainder of the section. The meeting of God with intermediary that restores our likeness is described as a birth—'for in each new now God is born in us and out of this sublime birth the Holy Spirit flows with all his gifts' (Eb1528–b1529). It is realized in every good work done with a pure intention. The gradations of this kind of union are set out in detail through an account of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (b1818–b2157).

Union with intermediary is always necessary, both here and in heaven; but even in this life we are also invited to the higher realm of supernatural union without intermediary (b2158–b2584). In this union, God's incomprehensible 'in-shining' transforms the soul's loving inclination into a modeless restful state of love where 'the abyss of God calls the abyss inward, that is, all who are united with the Spirit of God in enjoyable love.' Here we 'lose ourselves and flow away into the wild darkness of the Godhead' (b2173). Ruusbroec says that union without intermediary in the 'innermost life' can be practiced in three ways: by emptiness, by active desire, and by concomitant rest and work. The first manner (b2177–b2209) empties a person of all things and renders him immobile. It involves a uniting with God and a savoring that overflows into the unity of the higher faculties as 'an embrace and fullness of felt love' (Eb1889). The second mode (b2210–b2242) begins with a turning inward toward God with desire and virtuous activity (i.e., a form of active mediation), but it advances to a stage where 'the hunger and thirst of love become so great that he surrenders himself every moment and fails in his activity and exhausts himself and becomes annihilated in love' (Eb1913–b1915). The mention of hunger here indicates that this is another way of expressing the paradox of endless hunger mentioned above—'Living, he dies; and dying, he once again becomes living. And thus the yearning hunger and thirst of love are renewed in him every moment' (Eb1917–b1919). Ruusbroec says that this mode is dialectically

137 On these forms of motion, see Groot (1987) and Mommaers (1995c)–(1997).

related to the first, because such activity must always precede and follow upon rest.

The third mode (b2243–b2293) advances this point, noting that this form proceeds from the other two as the fusion of rest and activity, precisely what is also true of the highest life of the Trinity:

> Therefore, the inner person possesses his life in these two modes, that is, in resting and in activity. And in each he is whole and undivided, for he is wholly in God where he rests in enjoyment, and he is wholly in himself where he loves with works. And he is admonished by God at every moment to renew both rest and activity. (Eb1935–b1939)

In other words, the inner life of the mystic, whom Ruusbroec (like Eckhart) here refers to as the 'just man,' realizes the fusion of action and contemplation. Such a person is always going into God with enjoyable inclination and eternal rest at the same time that he is going out to creatures in 'common love' (b2275–b2277). Finally, the long consideration of the interior life closes with a brief section (b2555–b2584) illustrating how Christ is the model for this stage. Thus, Ruusbroec once again stresses the Christological aspect of the mystical path.

The final part of the *Spiritual Espousals* is devoted to the contemplative life.[138] It is a relatively brief account, and although Ruusbroec also spoke about the contemplative life in other works,[139] this section is a good summary of his teaching. The mystical themes explored here, such as our eternal pre-existence in God, the birth of the Word in the soul, and union without distinction, make Ruusbroec sound like Eckhart in many places. Nonetheless, viewing this exposition in the light of the qualifications found in other parts of the treatise and other places in his works, we see how the Brabantine canon worked out a critical retrieval of aspects of Eckhart's mysticism of the ground, as had Henry Suso and John Tauler.

In introducing this section, Ruusbroec notes that elevation to 'superessential contemplation' (*overweselijcken scouwene*) rests totally upon the initiative of the God whose 'hidden divine nature is eternally active, contemplating and loving with respect to the persons, and always enjoying an embrace of the persons in the unity of the essence' (Ec12–c14). He also emphasizes the inexpressibility of 'divine contemplation' as being beyond all human words. Nevertheless,

138 Warnar (2007), pp. 117–120, notes how Ruusbroec here seems to speak in his own voice in a way different from what is found in *Realm*.

139 On the contemplative life, see especially the account of the last three gifts of the Holy Spirit in *Realm* 1892–2421 as well as *Tabernacle* 7:1–31, *Enclosures* 651–890, *Mirror* 1702–2165, *Rungs* 1005–1198, and *Beguines* 1:327–867.

a bold claim is made for those few who have attained this stage: 'For to comprehend and to understand God above all similitudes as he is in himself is to be God with God, without intermediary or any otherness which can create a hindrance or a mediation' (Ec28–c31). Once again, the four phrases from Mt. 26:5, which Ruusbroec now says are spoken by the Father himself in the hidden depths of God, provide the structure for the exposition.

The command to 'see' Ruusbroec explains as embracing the three things necessary for contemplating God without intermediary, viewed as a precondition for the contemplative union that is without any difference (c53–c84). The first is outward ordering in the virtues accompanied by inward freedom from all works and images. The second is cleaving to God with devoted intention and love; the third is being lost in the dark abyss of modelessness. When these conditions have been fulfilled, the 'incomprehensible light that is the Son of God' can shine in the empty spirit so that it can become 'the very brightness which it receives' (Ec68–c69). The spirit now has lost all sense of distinction between itself and God—'he finds and feels himself to be that very light by which he sees and nothing else' (c81–c82). The phrase 'the Bridegroom is coming' (c85–c111) indicates the constant birth and illumination of the Bridegroom out of the fruitful and living ground. Here all creaturely activity fails and there is nothing but 'an eternal contemplation and gazing at the light with the light and in the light' (Ec80–c81). This birthing is constant because it occurs not in time but in the eternal now. The spirit no longer sees God, but it has become the vision by which God sees and: 'The spirit's capacity for comprehending is opened so wide for the coming of the Bridegroom that the spirit itself becomes the very breadth which it comprehends' (c106–c108, transl. Wiseman, p. 148).

The third point, 'go out,' spoken by the Holy Spirit in the soul, indicates a going out into eternal being in the Trinity through superessential contemplation. The love that is the Holy Spirit catches the contemplative up into the embrace of the Trinity where it resides at rest in the superessential divine unity, 'beyond the distinction of persons' (*boven persoenlijc onderscheet*: c123–c124). In this 'beginning without beginning' the Father comprehends himself perfectly in giving birth to the Son, and all creatures flow out eternally in him in their 'life-giving ideas' before they are created in time. This form of virtual existence, also explored by 14th-century German mystics, is the true reality of all things and the goal of the mystical path. Here God 'beholds himself as well as all creatures in a one-fold seeing; and this is God's image and likeness and our image and likeness, for God reflects himself and all things in it. In this divine image all creatures have an eternal life apart from themselves, as in their eternal exemplar' (Ec129–c132). In our present created life we are called to pursue this image in a supernatural way so that we can come to 'possess it actively

and enjoyably with him in eternal blessedness' (Ec135–c136). In the contemplative life, therefore, we become one with the 'eternal resplendence which is the birth of the Son.' This is a true union without distinction. Contemplatives who have attained this state 'see and feel and find by means of this divine light that according to the mode of their uncreatedness they are themselves the same one-fold ground out of which this brightness shines forth without measure in a divine mode . . .' (Ec149–c152). It was easy for critics (Jean Gerson was one) to find in such phrases hints or expressions of mystical error, although the full consideration of Ruusbroec's teaching about union shows that these passages need to be balanced with his constant qualifications about the ongoing created status of the soul.

Ruusbroec closes his treatise with a consideration of the meaning of the phrase 'to meet him' on the level of the contemplative life (c205–c226). Both the 'going out' and the 'meeting' are expressions of love, but the former is a continuous reception of the illuminative birth of the Son, while the latter is a sharing in the emanation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of love who arises from the meeting of Father and Son. 'And this love,' says Ruusbroec, 'actively and enjoyably encompasses and pervades the Father, the Son, and everything that is living in both of them with such great richness and joy that all creatures must keep eternally silent about it' (Ec190–c192). The human spirit which marvels at this mystery becomes one with the Spirit of God (see 1 Cor. 6:17) and now possesses itself in its uncreated mode. This is a sharing in the inner dynamic relations of the persons of the Trinity (c228–c236). Ruusbroec's last comment is an evocation of the unknowability and inexpressibility of this final stage in the 'abyss of namelessness' (Ec211). In this 'fathomless whirlpool of simplicity . . . the ground itself remains totally uncomprehended' (Ec215–c217). Although 'this is a dark stillness in which all the loving are lost,' love continues to draw us on so that we desire to 'flow into the wild waves of the sea from which no creature could ever draw us back' (Ec221–c224).

The Spiritual Espousals summarizes Ruusbroec's message about the soul's return to the divine Tri-unity. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile taking a closer look at Ruusbroec's view of the goal of the path, that is, union with God, especially because there was considerable debate about the proper way to understand uniting with God in the late Middle Ages and also because Ruusbroec's teaching about union was controversial. The standard conception of union with God as a union between the infinite Spirit and the created spirit in perfect love and conformity of wills (*unitas spiritus* of 1 Cor. 6:17) was challenged in the 13th century and later by expressions of union that insisted that on some level union could go beyond loving conformity to a stage where there was no longer any distinction or difference between the two, where God was all in all (*unitas*

indistinctionis).[140] Such forms of union were taught by women mystics such as Hadewijch and Marguerite Porete and were brought to a high level of speculative sophistication by Eckhart. They were also suspect, becoming a factor in the condemnations of Porete and Eckhart, as well as the attacks on the Free Spirit heretics. In this contentious atmosphere, Ruusbroec's contributions to the understanding of mystical union were among the most important and subtle of the time.

Ruusbroec speaks of union extensively in his writings.[141] In keeping with his doctrine of God and anthropology, he distinguished three forms of union, as we have seen: union with intermediary, which corresponds to God's action in the created universe and man's lower nature; union without intermediary, in which we are raised up in our unity of spirit into the life of the Trinity; and finally, union without difference in which we lose all sense of distinction between ourselves and God in the essential love and enjoyment of the divine essence.[142] The difference between union without intermediary and union without difference, according to Ruusbroec, is like that between the 'union' (*eeninge*) of two separate things and the 'unity' (*eenigheit*) of the divine essence.[143] Union without difference, as Ruusbroec expresses it, has many of the characteristics of Eckhart's union of indistinction. What distances Ruusbroec's view from that of the Dominican is his insistence that all three forms of union are concomitant and lasting, to be realized both here and hereafter. Like Suso and Tauler, Ruusbroec makes it clear that in union without difference the soul loses the ability to distinguish between itself and the one

140 For more on union, see McGinn (1996a).

141 Having already considered the teaching on union in the *Espousals*, in what follows I will concentrate on the *Little Book*. Other major considerations include: *Realm* 2075–2174; *Stone* 628–752; *Enclosures* 661–890; *Mirror* 412–462, 997–1011, 1864–1953, and 2102–2164; *Rungs* 386–407, 883–942, and 1050–1198; and finally *Beguines* 1:663–723; 2a:45–355; 2b:1067, 2093–2145; and 2c:1333–1357. There are also treatments of union in *Tabernacle*. See, e.g., *4:233–416*, 4:386–412, 4:1499–1557, 4:1633–1709, *4:1831–1891*, 4:1923–1951; 5:354–359, 5:412–443, 5:623–635, 5:681–696, 5:2321–2327, 5:3251–3290, 5:3338–3373, 5:4250–4264, 5:4382–4399, *5:5090–5116*, 5:5677–5684; *6:46–92*; and *7:1–29* (more important passages in italics).

142 The meaning of union *sonder differentie ochte onderscheet* (*Little Book* 36) has been a *crux interpretationis* of Ruusbroec's view of union. An anonymous treatise defending the canon's orthodoxy against Gerson glosses the word *onderscheet* with the word *tusschenscheet*, i.e., 'partition.' Nevertheless, the phrase from the *Little Book* seems to equate it more with 'difference.' See Faesen (2000).

143 *Mirror* 2102–2109, a key passage. In lines 2103–2105 we read: . . . *dat es boven werken ende ghedooeghen in een salegh ledegh sijn, boven* eeninghe *met gode in* eenegheit . . . (my emphasis).

supreme enjoyment of the divine essence, but, for all that, it never becomes God in an ontological sense.[144] Union without difference is a union of essential love. It *deifies* the soul in the sense of making it 'God-like' (*godgelike/ godformich*), but it does not annihilate human nature.

This teaching is already evident in Ruusbroec's first treatise, the *Realm of Lovers*, and, as we have seen, it helps form the structure of the *Spiritual Espousals*. Its fullest exposition, however, comes in the late *Little Book of Enlightenment*, a work Ruusbroec tells us he was inspired to write because some of his readers had misunderstood the bolder expressions about union without difference found in the *Realm*.[145] Throughout the treatise, Ruusbroec is concerned to make clear the difference between his view of union and that of the false mystics.

At the outset Ruusbroec sets forth the three forms of union and the fact that he finds them present 'in nature and in grace and in glory' (E31), in other words, they are inherent possibilities in human nature, which can be actualized through grace while in this life and which will also remain present in heaven. He also insists that despite the existence of 'union without difference or distinction,' we never lose our creaturehood to become God. The first form of uniting (45–165) is through the mediation of grace acting through the sacraments of the Church and the activities of a virtuous life—'And without this union one cannot please God nor be saved' (E45). This is the kind of union that the false mystics seek to suppress.

Union without intermediary is discussed at greater length (166–383) and with particular stress on the role of love as the motive force in attaining this type of oneness with the Trinity. Ruusbroec insists, once again, that this union in the interior life embraces both positive and negative aspects—'Heavenly health raises man above all things in free power to praise and love God in every way . . . After this comes the hellish evil which sets man down in misery and in deprivation of all savor and of all consolation he has felt until now' (E167–170). Both experiences are part of the path to the second stage of union, though the latter is more efficacious. This form of union initially involves both knowing and loving and rest and action: 'This simple knowledge and experience of God is possessed in essential love and is exercised and maintained through active love' (E229–231). Although it is without intermediary, it still maintains 'a great distinction (*onderscheet*), for the creature does not become God nor God creature' (E237–238). In the highest stage of essential love (*weseleke minne*), how-

144 On this difference between Ruusbroec and the Free Spirits, see Feys (1991), pp. 113–114 and 121.

145 *Little Book* 24–31.

ever, this union will transcend all understanding as 'a common life of the contemplative person' (E251). The touch of God experienced in this state often flows downward into the lower powers, producing charismatic states and even eccentric behavior (306–328), but its essence consists in sharing in the essential divine love where 'the divine persons embrace mutually in eternal complacency with an infinite and active love in unity' (E294–295).

The difference between union without intermediary and union without difference is subtle. Ruusbroec begins the final part of his treatise by summarizing his account of union with intermediary and without intermediary (384–439), thus emphasizing the continuing necessity for all three modes. In union without intermediary 'the Father and the Son by means of the Holy Spirit stand embraced . . . into the unity of their nature' (E351–353), drawing back the higher powers of enlightened souls with their 'imageless naked understanding' to 'the summit of their spirit' (*dat overste haers geests*; 413). Thus the created image is united to its eternal image as 'threefold in unity and one in trinity' (E366). Nevertheless, 'undergoing God's transformation in simplicity' (E373–374) still leaves the creature with a sense of the distinction between it and the Creator. When the awareness of that distinction is lost we have arrived at 'unity without difference' (*enecheit sonder differentie*; discussed in 438–472). Such union is possible because the love of God can be considered not only as ceaselessly flowing out and back but also as 'above all distinction in essential enjoyment according to the bare essence of divinity' (E381–382). Enlightened mystics in some way become aware of this form of 'essential inward gazing,' 'enjoyable inclination,' and 'sinking away from themselves into the modeless abyss of fathomless beatitude' (E384–385). Here the spirits 'melt away,' 'are annihilated,' and 'fall away from themselves and are lost in a bottomless unknowing' (E390–391). At this point Ruusbroec employs language similar to Eckhart: 'The blessed essence which is the enjoyment of God himself and all his beloved is so plain and simple that there is neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Spirit according to personal distinction, nor any creature' (E399–402). Like Eckhart, Ruusbroec also appeals to the key scriptural proof-text for union of indistinction, Jn. 17:21–24, Christ's prayer that his followers may be brought to perfect union with him and the Father. The Brabantine mystic, however, exegetes this prayer as signifying the concomitance of all three forms of union (468–508).

In several works (e.g., *Realm, Espousals, Rungs, Beguines*) Ruusbroec identifies the highest form of union with the 'contemplative life' (*scouwende leven*). But contemplation, like union, is an analogous word that signifies the whole process of fixing our loving attention on God in higher and higher stages of transformation. In the *Twelve Beguines* he explicitly distinguishes three modes of contemplation that correspond to the three stages in the mystical path and

the three forms of union. Speaking of a modeless manner of contemplation of God achieved by the 'intellectual faculty' above reason, Ruusbroec notes that 'this modeless manner thus practiced is an intermediary between contemplating in intelligible images and in likenesses, and a bare contemplation above all images in divine light' (E1:523–525). Contemplation, therefore, is another way of talking about the entire mystical itinerary.

In discussing union, Ruusbroec also uses the verb 'to transform' (*overformen*) and its derivatives frequently.[146] Being transformed into God is a way of expressing deification, one of the most constant themes in Christian mysticism. Ruusbroec did not hesitate to use the language of deification, becoming 'god-like,' as we have seen, though he hedged it with qualifications. The most important of these is his oft-reiterated statements about the distinction that always remains between God and creature, even in the highest stage of union.[147] The second is his use of the traditional adage that 'we are sons of God by grace, not by nature.'[148] The third, and most conclusive, is his opposition to the views of the Free Spirits, and even to those aspects of Eckhart's thought that he believed threatened the status of created being.

When Ruusbroec speaks of the mystic's transformation into God, at times he also employs the language of destruction or annihilation. In the first part of the *Twelve Beguines*, for example, he speaks of those who have arrived at the fourth and highest mode of love as having 'the capacity to be annihilated and to melt together in love, for they have become deiform (*godformich*) and transformed into Christ and reformed by the Spirit of our Lord, just as molten iron is transformed and united to the fire . . .' (E1:604–607). Lest the unwary reader take this in the wrong sense, however, he adds: '. . . the human spirit does not become God, but it is given the form of God' (E609–610). Later in the treatise we read that in the fire of the Holy Spirit, 'where it is hottest, there our spirit burns and undergoes the love of God, and when it is more than hot, it is burned up and undergoes the transformation by God' (E2b:795–797). In the *Mirror*, 'illuminated people are always dying in love and coming to nought in unity with God' (E97–98; cf. 139, 1888); and in the *Seven Enclosures*, the 'spirit is annihilated and faints away in love and becomes itself love in love.'[149] It is clear, however, that Ruusbroec is using annihilation and its equivalents in a meta-

146 Verdeyen (1993b), p. 60.

147 Many such passages have already been cited. For a particularly strong formulation, see *Beguines* 2a:165–171.

148 E.g., *Mirror* 1883–1885; cf. 1922–1924, and 2033; and *Little Book* 424–425 and 478–480.

149 *Enclosures* E581–582. For some other uses of annihilation language (*vernieuten*), see *Little Book* 449; *Espousals* b1164 and b2224; *Stone* 548 and 729; and *Tabernacle* 4:940–948, 5:354–359, 559–570, 5057–5066, and 5090–5104.

phorical sense of the loss of a perception of one's identity, not to indicate the kind of the self-annihilation claimed by the Free Spirits.[150]

This message of a deifying union that participates in both the activity and the inner fruition of the Trinity is constant across Ruusbroec's writings: it is what he calls the 'common life.'[151] This provides his mysticism with a distinctive sense of balance. The 'common life' integrates everyday human experience into the heights of mystical love. In the *Sparkling Stone*, for example, he notes that we must avoid two extremes: the idea that we become God and lose our created nature, or the perverse desire to remain locked in our own selves. Rather, he says, 'We should feel ourselves completely in God and completely in ourselves. And between these two feelings we find nothing but the grace of God and the practice of our loving' (E493–495). In the *Seven Rungs* he compares going in to inactive enjoyment and going out in good works to the act of opening and closing our eyes:

> Just as we open our physical eyes, see, and again close them, so fast that we do not feel it, so do we die in God and live from God and always remain one with God. Thus we shall go out into our sense-life, and go in with love and cleave to God and remain united in God without moving.[152]

Ruusbroec's view of the mystical life is one of participation in the perfect fusion of rest and action in the Trinity—rest and motion, going in and going out, going up and going down, giving and receiving, these are our human ways of expressing the supreme dynamism of the God who is essential love and also essentially beyond human knowing. Ruusbroec's message at the end is simple and positive: God is love and we can become that love.

---

150 Especially in *Espousals* b2458–b2471.

151 Some of the major discussions of the common life, as found in God and shared by us, can be found in *Espousals* a74–a84, b1083–b1110, b1223–b1302, b 2005–b2099, b2274–b2284; *Stone* 936–961; *Enclosures* 868–890; *Mirror* 810–825 and 1400–1432; *Rungs* 801–833 and 1116–1145; *Little Book* 279–96 and 384–401; and *Beguines* 2b:660–677.

152 *Rungs* E1070–1073. Ruusbroec follows this account of the concomitance of motion in and out with a passage on the necessity for both up and down movement on the ladder (1135–1138).

Ruusbroec as a Theologian: The Holy Spirit

Lieve Uyttenhove

Pneumatology or the Christian doctrine of the Spirit has a key role in the works of Jan van Ruusbroec.[1] Being among the most prominent teachings in Christian faith, it is used by the author—together with the doctrine of the Trinity—to describe the Christian contemplative or mystical life as a communion of love with God. By way of an exhaustive analysis of Ruusbroec's oeuvre, it has emerged that there are several accounts of the Holy Spirit, all of which possess unique and slightly different emphases given their context. Theologically, there is reference to the Spirit with respect to theology of creation (1), biblical theology (2), theology of grace (3), Trinitarian theology (4), Christology (5), the doctrine of Mary (6), the inspiration of Scripture and Church (7), and the baptismal formula (8). At the level of the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit is treated with regards to a personal relation of love with God (9). In closing with these different specifications conferred on the Holy Spirit, the spiritual life of mystics is thus situated as 'analogous' to God's own Trinitarian life (10).

Although the fourth and tenth topics are first and foremost in elucidating Ruusbroec's central mystical notion, it nonetheless appears that all of these discussed subjects allow for a better understanding of the meaning and the role of the Holy Spirit for the mystical life. Therefore, before presenting the results of our study, we will first offer a succinct survey on all Ruusbroec's statements on the Holy Spirit.

1 The Holy Spirit from the Perspective of the Theology of Creation

In Ruusbroec's oeuvre there is little reference to the Holy Spirit with respect to creation. Examples of implicit allusions are found in Ruusbroec's first work, *The Realm of Lovers*. Given that the construction of this work is something like that of a *Summa theologiae*, which displays Ruusbroec's study of theology, it should thus come as no surprise that the author focuses upon creation.[2] With

1 For the generous help that I received in proofreading this article, I am very much obliged to Patrick R. Cooper.

2 Joseph Alaerts, Introduction to *Realm*, p. 13 & ibid., n. 4.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_08

regard to the Holy Spirit, this entails highlighting God's goodness, one of God's characteristics when considered as the Creator. Referring to God's might, God's wisdom, and God's goodness, the following two citations indeed exemplify, albeit implicitly, the Creator's eternal being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

> In creation is shown forth His might; in its order, His wisdom; in the outflowing with His manifold gifts, His goodness and His generosity. (*Realm* E24–26)

> Thus is explained the first point, where he says, 'the Lord': His might, for He created all things from nothing; His wisdom, for He ordered everything in the realms of heaven and of earth; His goodness and His generosity, for He endowed heaven and earth, angels and humans with manifold gifts. (*Realm* E47–51)

Ruusbroec makes it clear that God's properties—which we understand to refer, here, to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one nature and one essence (*wesen*)—are eternally distinguished but not separated. Even though creation reflects God's properties as distinct, they are one in God. At the same time and without cease, God is might, wisdom, and goodness. Consequently, when speaking of God's might and God's wisdom—referring to the Father and the Son in God's onefold nature and essence—God's self is alluded to. We must likewise consider God's goodness and generosity—denoting the Holy Spirit—as God.

2 The Spirit on the Level of Biblical Theology

In agreement with other medieval mystical writers, such as Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), William of Saint-Thierry (*c*.1075–1148), Hadewijch (13th century), and Beatrice of Nazareth (*c*.1200–1268), Ruusbroec's theological statements are firmly rooted in the Bible. Within the scope of his theology, the biblical symbol of the 'Spirit of God' represents a consistent image. The notion is also presented as the 'Holy Spirit' and the 'Spirit of our Lord.' Similar to the Holy Spirit in creation theology, the biblical Spirit of God—whether referring to the Old Testament or the New Testament—likewise implies God's self and refers to God's goodness. Throughout his works, Ruusbroec recounts the Spirit's attribute of goodness as: infinite generosity (*Realm* E290); incomprehensible charity and generosity, pity and graciousness, infinite fidelity and benevolence, and unfathomable goodness (*The Spiritual Espousals* Eb910–912).

On the level of biblical theology, God's goodness is moreover associated with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed in the human soul. Ruusbroec likens the outpouring of the divine gifts to three metaphors. The bestowal is first equated to a living spring with seven springing veins (*Realm* E287), a fathomless fountain (*Espousals E*234–235), a flowing fountain (*Espousals* Eb913–914), a fount of all good (*The Spiritual Tabernacle* E5:219), and a living fount with seven streams (*Tabernacle* E5:264). The second image parallels the Spirit's outpouring with a 'fire that ignites and makes the seven gifts burn' (*Realm E*290–291), with 'a blazing flame which burns up everything in unity' (*Espousals* Eb913) and with a consuming fire of sevenfold works (*Tabernacle* E5:265). Third, the gifts of God's Spirit are compared with resplendence (*Realm* E290), the eternal resplendent sun (*Realm* E293), and with a bright sun with seven rays (*Tabernacle* E5:264).

The examples from *Realm* and *Espousals* below exemplify very well Ruusbroec's attributing God's goodness to that of the biblical Spirit of God:

> The Spirit of God is like a living spring with seven springing veins that produce seven streams, living and welling up in the same ground, flowing through the realm of the soul, and making it fruitful in many ways. The Spirit of God is the infinite generosity, resplendence and fire that ignites and makes the seven gifts burn and give off light in the soul's pure mind, like the seven lamps before the throne of (God's) exalted majesty. The Holy Spirit, divine love, the eternal resplendent sun, gives off seven resplendent shining rays which warm, illuminate, and fructify the realm of the soul. (*Realm* E286–294)
>
> Since this stream of clarity gives many a mode with distinction, it also shows to the enlightened reason the attributes of the Holy Spirit: incomprehensible charity and generosity, pity and graciousness, infinite fidelity and benevolence, incomprehensible and great outflowing riches and unfathomable goodness, flowing through all the celestial spirits with blissfulness; a blazing flame which burns up everything in unity, a flowing fountain rich with every savor according to the desire of each. (*Espousals* Eb908–914)

3 Theology of Grace

In accordance with the teaching of the Church, Ruusbroec considers God's goodness or God's love for humankind bestowed in the seven gifts of the Spirit as indicating God's grace. Grace in his oeuvre is 'synonymous with' and 'faithful'

to the biblical symbol of God as Spirit,[3] and, again, refers to God's self. But God is viewed here as the inward working of God's Spirit in the human soul through His seven gifts, which Ruusbroec ascribes to the inward impulse of the Holy Spirit or to God's inward speaking in the soul. The notion of the 'Spirit of God,' in some cases, is replaced by the 'Spirit of our Lord' and once by the 'Spirit of the Father.'

According to *Tabernacle* E4:1520, God's inward speaking is a 'hidden whispering to our inward ears.' The first part of *The Twelve Beguines* informs us that the communication of the Spirit of the Father takes place in the uplifted, bare, imageless mind (*Beguines* E1:441). In presenting God's bestowal of grace, Ruusbroec in fact draws special attention to the interior speech occurring from within—and not from without—in a person's heart. Therefore, in *Espousals*, *Tabernacle*, and *The Seven Rungs* he writes:

> Now, the grace of God which flows out of God is an inward impulse or prodding of the Holy Spirit, Who impels our spirit from within and stokes it towards all virtue. This grace flows from within, not from without. For God is more inwards to us than we are to ourselves, and His inward impulse, or working, within us, naturally or supernaturally, is nearer and more inner to us than our own work. And therefore God works in us from within outwards, and all creatures from without inwards. And this is why grace and all divine gifts and God's interior speech come from within, in the unity of our spirit, not from without, in the imagination, by sensory images. (*Espousals* Eb110–119)

> And if we thus receive hearing and seeing within, from God's Spirit, then we remain enlightened, living, and obedient to the truth and to the teaching of God within and without. (*Tabernacle* E4:1535–1537)

> To this, the Spirit of Our Lord answers in the inwardness of the soul, not with words without, but in the affections within. (*Rungs* E551–552)

4 Trinitarian Theology

With respect to the first three points—theology of creation, biblical theology, and theology of grace—Ruusbroec does not specify as to *what* he specifically conceives of in terms of the Spirit's goodness. However, in his exposition on

3 See Haight (1991), esp. pp. 114–115.

Trinitarian theology, he characterizes in detail the interior qualities of such goodness. On the one hand, he considers the Holy Spirit in God's fruitful nature. On the other, his point of departure is that the Holy Spirit is looked upon at the level of God's essence. By God's fruitful nature, Ruusbroec has in mind God's activity or God's inner dynamic of love, which ceaselessly and simultaneously consists in flowing-out and flowing-back of the divine Persons. By God's essence, the author refers to the *actus essendi* or the being of God.[4]

The Inner Dynamic of Love in God's Fruitful Nature

The Holy Spirit is the Love that Flows Forth from the Father and the Son

With regard to the out-flowing of the third Person in God's fruitful nature, Ruusbroec argues, in line with Latin Christian teaching on the question of the *filioque*, that the Holy Spirit flows forth from the Father and the Son.[5] In his works such as *Realm, Espousals*, and *Beguines*, Ruusbroec explains this coming forth on the basis of a mutual contemplation or 'seeing and seeing-back' (*Realm* E1534), a 'mutual vision' (*Espousals* Eb1216), and 'mutual seeing' (*Beguines* E2a:562) between the Father and the Son.[6] One example may suffice:

> With respect to divine nature: [...] the memory of the Father contemplates without cease His bottomless wisdom, namely, His Son; and the eternal wisdom, the Son, without cease, contemplates the unity of the fruitful nature of the Fatherhood. Out of this contemplation of the two Persons with one wisdom, namely, the Son, there flows bottomless love, namely, the Holy Spirit. (*Realm* E1070–1075)

In addition to this, *Realm* clarifies the *filioque* or the out-flowing of the Spirit also in terms of 'giving birth' of the Father and out of the 'being born' of the Son (*Realm* E1866–1867). In *Espousals* Eb927, Ruusbroec argues that the Father and the Son 'spirate' one Spirit.[7] In a similar way, we find in *Beguines* E2b:42–43 that 'the Father with the Son pour forth from themselves the Holy Spirit.' Using the *filioque* phraseology, Ruusbroec mentions in *The Christian Faith* that the Holy

4 The expression *actus essendi* is taken from Deblaere (1961).

5 See Denzinger (2001), n° 150, and Beauchamp (1998).

6 The idea of 'mutual beholding' Ruusbroec has in common with William of Saint-Thierry. See *Aenigma* (2007), p. 132 (1. 99–100 & 103–106).

7 Ruusbroec's 'to spirate' exhibits a similarity with the language of Thomas Aquinas. See *Summa theologiae*, I, q. XXVII, art. IV; *Summa theologiae* I, q. XXXVI, art. III.

Spirit 'goes out from the Father and *from* the Son' (*Faith* E69–70).[8] In *Tabernacle* E4:194, referring to the metaphor of fire, he understands God's Spirit as a 'fire of love that is ignited between the Father and the Son.'

Next, the out-flowing or coming forth of the Holy Spirit is linked up to God's love (*Realm* E1535), variously described as follows: bottomless love (*Realm* E1075); fathomless love (*Espousals* Eb1217); mutual love (*Espousals* Ec189; *Faith* E63); free love of God (*Tabernacle* E4:195–196); eternal love of the Father and the Son (*Faith* E69); love of them both (*A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness* E873, E1937 and E1984; *Beguines* E2b:46–47); will or love of the Father and the Son (*Espousals* Eb927; *Rungs* E331); one will and one love in both of them (*Beguines* E2a:564).

With respect to biblical theology, we could then call God's out-flowing love the Holy Spirit's bestowal of the seven gifts. On the level of theology of grace, we could speak here of God's interior speaking or the love of the Holy Spirit impelling and stoking a person to a virtuous life.

The Holy Spirit as Bond of the Father and the Son

Of particular interest is Ruusbroec's conviction that God's love, which is related to the out-flowing of the Holy Spirit as a Person, is, at the same time, understood as a bond (*bant*) of the Father and the Son (*Faith* E84) and considered as the unity of the Holy Spirit:

> [B]ut out of the fact that the Son is born a Person other than the Father, where the Father beholds Him as born, and everything one with Him as the life of everything, and the Son, in turn, beholds the Father giving birth and fruitful, and Himself, and all things, in the Father—this is seeing and seeing-back in a fruitful nature—from this comes a love, that is, the Holy Spirit, and it is a bond from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father. (*Realm* E1530–1536)

This bond, indeed, refers to the unity of God's nature where the Father and the Son are ceaselessly one in the Holy Spirit (*Espousals* Eb863–865; *Beguines* E2a:568–569), or, where the Father and the Son, without cease, possess their nature in the unity of the Holy Spirit (*Espousals* Eb1208–1209).[9]

---

8 Cursive words and/or texts in the English CCCM Ruusbroec quotations refer in each instance to the present author's emendation of the original translation.

9 It is possible that Ruusbroec is making use of a concept earlier on used by Augustine, who uses bond to underline the ineffable communion that exists between the Father and the Son. See *De trinitate*, V, XI, 12 transl. Hill (1994), p. 197. Marius Victorinus, who first used the word to clarify the relationship between the Father and the Son, is considered to be the inspiration

The Unity of the Holy Spirit: Source of Flowing-Back and Flowing-Out

What is most important in the foregoing context is that Ruusbroec connects 'bond' or the 'unity of the Holy Spirit' to the source of the inner-divine dynamic of both flowing-out and flowing-back:

> In the threeness, God performs all His works; out of the *unity*, there is the birth-giving and the flowing-back of the Persons in hunger of love and in great desire. Nevertheless, there is no abiding here, for the unity is fruitful, and is the proper ground of the Persons. (*Realm* E1541–1545)

With respect to the flowing-back in God's fruitful nature, this means that the Holy Spirit regarded as a 'Person' is not to be considered as a principle of *regiratio* (flowing-back). The love in which the Father and the Son are one in unity is, in truth, one and the same love, which comes into existence as the third Person in the out-flowing from the Father and the Son. For there is only one Holy Spirit or one divine love. However, Ruusbroec is not saying that the Holy Spirit, as a 'Person,' is bringing about the flowing-back or is originating it. According to Ruusbroec, the source of the flowing-back of the Father and the Son lies in God's unity of love or in the Holy Spirit regarded as 'unity.' Our author's point, indeed, is that the Holy Spirit *is* without cease the unity of the Father and the Son, an understanding that excludes regarding the 'Person' of the Holy Spirit as bringing about such a unity after having first come forth.[10]

Ruusbroec's conviction that the origin of God's flowing-back and God's flowing-out is combined with God's unity of love of which Ruusbroec also articulates in terms of the 'unity of the Holy Spirit,' is expressed in the following citations from *Beguines*:

> God is one in His nature, and His nature is fruitful in threeness of Persons, eternally flowing out, living and working, with distinction of Persons, knowing and loving, creating and making heaven and earth and all creatures. And He is eternally without cease flowing back in again, empty, without activity, in His essence, with eternal Love, in the unity of the holy [*sic*] Spirit. (*Beguines* E2a:426–431)

---

behind Augustine. See Bardy (1950), col. 1684. Or perhaps 'bond' stems from Bonaventure, who also uses *nexus* (bond) to express the aspect of the unity of both Persons. See *Sent.* I, *Prim. Sent.*, dist. X, art. II, q. 2. See Uyttenhove (2011), pp. 106–107.

10 See Uyttenhove (2007), esp. pp. 407–408, and Uyttenhove (2011), pp. 109–114.

> And in this mutual seeing between Father and Son, there flows an eternal complacency, that is, the Holy Spirit, the third Person, who flows from them both. For He is one will and one love in both of them, and out of them both eternally flowing-out and flowing back into the nature of the Godhead. (*Beguines* E2a:561–565)

> But the *unity* of the Holy Spirit, in whom the Persons live and reign, is active in the out-flowing, and fruitfully operating all things according to free nobility, wisdom and power of the Persons. But in the *flowing-in* of the Persons the *unity* of the Holy Spirit is enjoyably drawing inwards and containing the Persons above distinction, in an enjoyment of fathomless love that God Himself is in *essence* and in nature. (*Beguines* E2b:47–52)

The Unity of the Holy Spirit Looked upon from God's Essence

Ruusbroec's insight in God as 'unity of love' on the level of God's fruitful nature—as source of both in-drawing and out-flowing—is essential to the understanding of his Trinitarian theology, though it is not entirely sufficient. For the bond or the unity of love is not only linked with the fruitfulness of God's nature. If we are to illustrate the 'whatness' of God's love or the Holy Spirit's distinctness as it emerges from his Trinitarian thought, we also have to take into account the aspect of God's essence.

Regarding God's essence, Ruusbroec first believes that the Father and the Son are united in the same unity of love, of which we had earlier considered with respect to God's fruitful nature. Next, the essential unity—or the bond at the level of God's essence—is termed as the 'embrace' and the 'enjoyment' of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. There is, indeed, one and the same bond or unity of love looked upon from two angles: from God's fruitfulness, and from God's enjoyment. This is articulated in *Realm*, *Tabernacle*, and *Little Book of Enlightenment* as follows:

> For since the unity of the Persons, according to the inward sight of the Persons and according to their enjoyable inclination, enjoys without cease, in the essence, as you have heard, the same unity is fruitful, and without cease, is giving birth to the eternal Wisdom, and out of giving birth and out of being born, there flows the Holy Spirit; this is God's activity. (*Realm* E1863–1867)

> The unity of divine nature is drawing the three Persons inward in the bond of love, and the divine essence contains the unity in emptiness, with an enjoyable embrace in essential love. (*Tabernacle* E4:1854–1856)

> There, the Father with the Son and all the beloved are enfolded and embraced in the bond of love, that is to say, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. It is this same unity which is fruitful according to the bursting-out of the Persons and in the return, an eternal bond of love which can nevermore be untied. (*Little Book* E328–332)

In Ruusbroec's exposition on the doctrine of the Trinity, we are thus invited to see that God's goodness or the Holy Spirit—bestowed in seven gifts and poured out in the human soul as grace—*is* the love flowing forth from the Father and the Son, in which they are ceaselessly and simultaneously drawn in and embraced in one enjoyment. Once again, in Ruusbroec's own words:

> And from His nature He bears His Son, His eternal Wisdom as one with Him in nature, an other in Person, God from God, by whom all things are made. And the Holy Spirit, the third Person, who flows from the Father and from the Son, who is one with them both in nature: that is their fathomless Love, in which they are eternally embraced in love and enjoyment. (*Rungs* E1101–1106)

Ruusbroec's specification of God's love or the Holy Spirit within the perspective of the theology of creation, biblical theology, theology of grace, and Trinitarian theology, serves in one way or another to introduce the Holy Spirit in the following four topics. His statements with respect to Christology, the doctrine of Mary, the source of inspiration of Scriptures and the Church, and the baptismal formula, indeed, all most probably assume—explicitly or implicitly—his aforesaid instructions on the Holy Spirit.

5 Christology

In the Christological light, the Holy Spirit is looked at from four angles. Ruusbroec first of all recalls Christ's humanity—His created spirit or spiritual nature—which has been encompassed by the Spirit of God, in this respect also called the 'Holy Spirit.' This aspect is exemplified above all in: *Tabernacle* E5:42–43, E5:74–75, E5:92–93, E5:119–120. The recurring expression 'encompassed' is once replaced by 'elevated by the Spirit of God' (*Tabernacle* E5:70). In *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*, Ruusbroec writes in a similar way:

> And the Holy Spirit rested in His soul and in His human nature with all His gifts, and made Him rich, generous and overflowing into all those who had need of Him and desired Him. (*Mirror* E1831–1833)

Second, the Holy Spirit is treated within Christ's gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. In this context, both the notions 'Holy Spirit' and 'Spirit' are used.

On the one hand, next to *Tabernacle* E5:2128–2129 and E5:4493–4494, and *Mirror* E789–790, especially *The Twelve Beguines* stresses that Jesus or Christ promised and sent His (Holy) Spirit: *Beguines* E2a:193–194, E2a:241, E2b:379–380, E2b:676, E2b:1270–1272, E2b:1322–1323, E2b:1475–1476, E2b:1694, E2c:351–352, E2c:1197. Referring to Christ's promise, the Holy Spirit is then sometimes called 'Consoler': *Beguines* E2b:1653, E2c:457. When Christ's promise is implied, there is reference to the 'Spirit' and the 'Spirit of God' (*Tabernacle* E5:2228–2233), and again to the 'Holy Spirit' (*Tabernacle* E5:2208 and E5:4455–4459; *Beguines* E2b:1614–1617).

On the other hand, painting the role of the Spirit during Pentecost in a Trinitarian theological way, Ruusbroec emphasizes that the Father with the Son sent the Holy Spirit (*Beguines* E2b:1670–1671 and E2b:2417–2418). Against this background and in accordance with Ruusbroec Trinitarian understanding, the Holy Spirit is explicitly presented here as the mutual love of the Father and the Son or as the Love of God:

> We must also believe that the Father with the Son sent the Holy Spirit, i.e., their mutual love, on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of our Lord. (*Faith* E62–63)

> And the fire rested upon each of them, and they were all filled by the Holy Spirit, that is, by the Love of God. And Love brought with Itself the Father and the Son, and thus they received the Holy Trinity. (*Tabernacle* E5:2178–2181)

Therefore, with respect to Christ, the Holy Spirit is depicted, third, as the enjoyment of the Father and the Son. This Trinitarian-theological image is connected with the evangelical promise or Christ's prayer 'That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you' (Jn. 17:21). We find the clearest example in *Little Book*:

> Christ desired this [the enjoyment of the elevated spirits with God] when He prayed His heavenly Father that all His beloved should be brought to perfect union, just as He is one with the Father in enjoyment, by means

> of the Holy Spirit. Thus he prayed and desired that He in us and we in Him and in His heavenly Father should become one in enjoyment, by means of the Holy Spirit. And that, I think, is the most loving prayer that Christ ever made for our beatitude. (*Little Book* E407–412)

Fourth, Christ's Spirit is understood as the Holy Spirit at work, through the sacraments, in human beings after Christ's death and resurrection (*Beguines* E2c:1134–1136). In *Beguines* it is also formulated as follows:

> After His ascension He has left us His living flesh, His holy blood in true charity. We can eat and drink, and be mindful of him with a continual savor. He gives us His glorious soul, full of mercy, full of glory, full of grace, which can fill us with grace and with benevolence. He gives us His created spirit, which has merited eternal life for us. He gives us His uncreated Spirit which is one God with Him and with His heavenly Father. (*Beguines* E2c:946–951)

Through His suffering and death, Christ is the holy oil by which all people have been anointed in the Holy Spirit (*Tabernacle* E1:61–62, E5:1733–1735, E5:2217–2220, E5:2250–2260, E5:2807–2809, E5:4344). Indeed it is *Tabernacle* that above all bears witness of such anointing:

> And thus they were consecrated and anointed in the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit Itself is the anointing which Christ has merited for us by His death. And therefore, we are all baptized and anointed in the death of Christ and in the Holy Spirit, but not equally, for there are many grades in holiness. (*Tabernacle* E5:2211–2215)

Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit into human beings after His death is further portrayed as the giving forth from Himself a flashing flame, which is the Holy Spirit (*Tabernacle* E5:1180–1182). In *Mirror* E1788–1789 and *Beguines* E2b:2362–2363, Ruusbroec links the outpouring of Christ's Spirit to Christ's love.

6 The Doctrine of Mary

In accordance with the articles of faith contained in the Nicea-Constantinople Symbolum and the (pseudo?-)Athanasian interpretation of the Symbolum,[11]

11 See Denzinger (2001), n° 46–47.

Ruusbroec highlights first the work and the power of the Holy Spirit with respect to the annunciation to Mary and Christ's human birth from the Virgin Mary. He expresses firm belief in Mary's conception of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Next to the example below from *Faith*, this belief is expressed in *Tabernacle* E5:1128–1132 and E5:1499–1501, *Rungs* E443–447 and E900–902, and *Beguines* E2a:160–165 and E2b:1551–1555.

> And we believe that this same eternal Son of God descended from the heavens for us, humans, and for our salvation, and adopted our human nature and was conceived by the Holy Spirit, i.e., through the agency and the power of the Holy Spirit and born from the Virgin Mary and he really became man. (*Faith* E24–27)

Making recourse to metaphorical language in *Espousals* E19–21, he explains that 'the priest who married the bride [Mary] was the Holy Spirit.' In a similar way, *Tabernacle* shows that Jesus Christ was taken up by Mary 'out of the stream of the Holy Spirit' (*Tabernacle* E1:49–53) and that the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the candelabrum of gold, 'was forged by means of the Holy Spirit, between the heavenly Father and the Virgin Mary' (*Tabernacle* E5:30–32). *Mirror* recounts that the Holy Spirit came down upon Mary (*Mirror* E526–527), that she was taught by Him (*Mirror* E532–533), and that He sent Christ or the Son of God into Mary's chamber or womb (*Mirror* E543–544, E1295–1297). In all these cases, God's Spirit is referred to as 'Holy Spirit,' without explicit reference to the doctrine of the Trinity.

With regard to Mary, God's Spirit is recalled a second time. In *Beguines* E2c:1265–1274, Ruusbroec informs us that on the Cross, Jesus sent His Spirit or the Spirit of God into Mary, reminding her of the words of the Angel Gabriel and filling her with charity for all people. In this case, the notion 'Spirit' and 'Spirit of God' is employed.

7 Source of Inspiration of the Scriptures and the Church

Again referring to the Nicea-Constantinople Symbolum and the (pseudo?-) Athanasian interpretation of the Symbolum, Ruusbroec first confesses in *Faith* that the Holy Spirit, in the Old Testament, has spoken through the prophets (*Faith* E74–76), and in the New Testament, through (the mouth of) the apostles (*Faith* E116–117, E128, E166). Second, in *Espousals* E622, *The Sparkling Stone* E119, E427–428, and *The Four Temptations* E132–134, he makes clear that the

Holy Spirit has composed the hidden teaching of Scripture, especially of the *Book of Revelation* or the *Apocalypse*. In all cases mentioned, the notion 'Holy Spirit' is used.

Denoting the Holy Spirit who speaks to the Church, Ruusbroec makes use of the concepts 'Spirit of God' and 'Spirit of our Lord' (*Temptations* E1–3). When stating that the Church and its teachers teach and explain the truth of Scripture by the Spirit, only the notion 'Holy Spirit' is employed (*Tabernacle* E5:955–956; *Beguines* E2b:2455–2461, E2c:1209–1211). The same applies to Ruusbroec's conviction that the Church lives through the Holy Spirit (*Faith* E99–101).

8 Baptismal Formula

When indicating the Christian baptismal formula 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Mt. 28:19), Ruusbroec evidently mentions the 'Holy Spirit' (*Tabernacle* E5:2147–2149 and E5:4382–4385). Accordingly, this notion is used for Jesus' baptism, where Ruusbroec, with an allusion to the third chapter of Matthew, recalls that the Holy Spirit descended on Christ as a dove (*Beguines* E2b:296).

Further, the Holy Spirit is interpreted as the abundant goodness of God with respect to the second baptism of penitence, which, according to Ruusbroec 'is ready for all sinners who repent their sins and seek forgiveness, and desire the Communion of Saints and that of holy Church' (*Faith* E122–124).

In addition, Ruusbroec sets forth the renewal of the baptism in the Holy Spirit hinting at the mystical life. Just as the sinners are baptized a second time in the Holy Spirit, so similarly all people who are born of God and are one in love with God are 'baptized anew' in the Holy Spirit, this time characterized as the living blood, or the death of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Beguines* E2b:1465–1467, E2c:66–70, E2c:697–699). Each time, the notion of 'Holy Spirit' is used.

9 The Holy Spirit in the Light of a Relation of Love with God

Ruusbroec's views on the Holy Spirit in the aforementioned points of discussion apply to his description of the Christian spiritual life. Christian spirituality has to do with a personal relationship of love with God and the life that accompanies it. The author clarifies this relation and this life as starting from God's gracious love or God's Spirit who moves a (good) person's soul in bringing it to

likeness with and enjoyment of God. God's love for humans understood as grace, indeed, is the source of the spiritual life, as it is God or God's Spirit who awakens spiritual hunger and the longing for God.

Ruusbroec develops the theme on three levels representing three dimensions of the spiritual life. The first is connected with good works and the life of outward virtues and is called the active life (*werkende leven*). The second is the inner or yearning life (*innighe* or *begheerlijcke leven*) and is related to the inward practice of virtues. The third level is characterized as the superessential or contemplative life (*overweselijcke* or *godscouwende leven*) and is brought into connection with (the felt experience of) the soul's union or communion with God in love.[12] On each of these levels, the author stresses the in-working of the Holy Spirit, who is also represented as 'Spirit,' 'Spirit of God,' and 'Lord's Spirit.'

The Holy Spirit's Impulse in the Active Life

With respect to the active life, on the one hand Ruusbroec suggests that the spiritual relationship with God will not reach fulfillment if practiced without any impulse of the Holy Spirit (*Realm* E206–208, E278–282, E1563–1579). On the other he asserts the necessary in-working of the Holy Spirit or the belief that the Spirit of God moves, overflows (*Beguines* E2b, 1998), stirs (*Mirror* E140–142), and impels human beings towards the exercise of virtues and good works:

---

12 For the meaning of Ruusbroec's term 'superessential' (*overweselijcke*), see Alaerts (1969a), p. 280: 'From this research, it will be shown that these terms are not first and foremost applicable to philosophical structures, and that the 'essential' denotes not the object but a quality of the contemplation.' Following Alaerts, Deblaere writes: 'Or, cette école plus tardive, surtout vivante aux 14e et 15e siècles, n'entend guère désigner par contemplations 'essentielles' [...] l'*objet* de la contemplation, mais sa qualité; elle ne met pas en discussion une vérité religieuse, mais le fonctionnement de la psychologie telle que l'enseignait l'École,' Deblaere (2004a), pp. 304–305. See also Alaerts (1969a), p. 290: 'The superessential (*overweselijc*) life, a synonym for the 'God-contemplating' life, puts the emphasis on the Other, on the Superessence, on the life that surpasses our life,' and n. 12 on the same page: 'This terminology [superessential] means the higher, stable grade of the mystical life in union, and not the contemplation (in our modern, theologically specialised, intellectualistic meaning) of God's essence (*wesen*).' See, in addition, Alaerts, Introduction to *Realm*, p. 26: 'Superessence' must not be understood in a Pseudo-Dionysian sense. See e.g., the following: *De div. nom.*, II, 10 (PG III, 648C), *De div. nom.*, I, 1 (PG III, 588B), and *De div. nom.*, I, 5 (PG III, 593C). This does not exclude the possibility that Ruusbroec's term 'superessence' (*overwesen*) may have been borrowed from pseudo-Dionysius' terminology. See Van Nieuwenhove (2003), p. 60 and pp. 108–109. See Uyttenhove (2011), p. 124, nn. 68 and 69.

> The first and lowest life that is born out of God and that the Holy Spirit gives and impels is called a virtuous life, dying to sins and increasing in virtues. And that life begins like this. The Holy Spirit shows His grace in a person's heart. (*Mirror* E105–108)

While employing *Tabernacle*'s metaphorical language, Ruusbroec presents the Holy Spirit as the 'fire of love, [which] is, in the mind, the foundation and the principal gift and root of all virtues' (*Tabernacle* E4:250–257).

Every good person's virtues and good works are then done in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Tabernacle* E4:1293). Even if the person in the active life is not aware of it, Ruusbroec is convinced that 'the Lord's Spirit is their guarantee' (*Beguines* E1:161).

The Holy Spirit's Inward Felt Impulse in the Inner/Yearning Life

Ruusbroec attributes the inner/yearning life describing a strong desire and longing for God to the inward, felt impulse (*Espousals* Eb182–183, Eb818–821) or the touch of the Holy Spirit (*The Seven Enclosures* E737–740; *Beguines* E1:574–577), which changes a person's soul from within.

The inner felt motion of the Spirit is expressed in similar words and images that are used in depicting the Spirit's in-working within the active life. To begin with, the Spirit of God impels, drives, draws, flows into human beings (*Espousals* Eb175–176); He spurs (*Espousals* Eb1333) and ignites it in burning love to God (*Espousals* Eb1635). Equally, through the Holy Spirit, God inclines Himself towards us (*Espousals* Eb1340–1341). Next, for the Spirit's enkindling (*Espousals* Eb214, Eb1039, Eb1219, *Stone* E469), Ruusbroec returns to the metaphor of God's fire of love (*Espousals* Eb224, Eb289–297). Making use of metaphoric language, the Holy Spirit's activity is also likened with the key art of the 'happiest [voice] that one can sing in heaven and on earth' (*Rungs* E778).

Moreover, the Spirit of God demands from one's good will that it praise and honor God (*Rungs* E365, E504), even if human beings can only undergo His in-working (*Beguines* E1:743). Given such an in-working of the Holy Spirit and His gifts, one must also be willingly obedient to Him to overcome every obstacle in the way of performing 'freely all that He commands,' and 'suffer without reluctance everything that He allows to happen' (*Beguines* E2a:397–406).

Recalling the renouncement of the Holy Spirit's impelling in the active life, Ruusbroec reiterates that human beings in the yearning life lose the inward impulse if they resist, reject or distrust the Spirit of God:

> For if we are to be perfect, we must go out and conduct ourselves in inward practice according to the manner in which the Spirit of God

> impels and drives and draws and flows into (us) and touches us. But if we resist the Spirit of God by dissimilarity of our life (to His), we lose the inward impulse and then we are inevitably deprived of virtues. (*Espousals* Eb174–178)

'One in love' with the Holy Spirit in the Superessential/ Contemplative Life

In comparison with the yearning life, which shows the way unto God through the Spirit's touching and the person's inner striving, the superessential or contemplative life concentrates on the person's union or communion with God in love.

The description of the Spirit drawing in humans and demanding them to be one love with Him (*Rungs* E551–559; *Beguines* E1:670–686, E1:752–785, E2c:662–663), leads Ruusbroec to emphasize the person's experience thereof. Wrought by the Holy Spirit (*Enclosures* E643), the soul reflects the feeling of being united to the Spirit (*Mirror* E1767), of hanging in His richness or in His love (*Tabernacle* E4:1872–1874), and of being in Him (*Beguines* E1:652). In short, Ruusbroec gives way to a feeling of being consumed and drawn into the Holy Spirit (*Stone* E471; *Beguines* E1:772–774). In Ruusbroec's own words: 'For the Holy Spirit is a consuming fire, which consumes and swallows up in its very self everything that it catches' (*Beguines* E2b:794–795). The Holy Spirit, indeed, pours forth His richness, which He is Himself (*Tabernacle* E4:1780–1782) and introduces the soul into God's restless, incomprehensible, superessential, and enjoyable love in order to know, experience, and taste God's goodness and to savor God's love 'in incomprehensible joy' (*Realm* E1792–1793, E2153). According to Ruusbroec, then, the living fountain of the Holy Spirit itself is the soul's wealth (*Stone* E786). Or, as specified by *Enclosures* E150–154, the soul is ushered 'into the living fountain of the Holy Spirit, where the veins of eternal sweetness spring forth.' *Rungs* E1060–1064 equates this stage of the spiritual life to eternal life.

Following the Holy Spirit and living the 'contemplative life that is demanded and counseled by the Spirit of our Lord' (*Beguines* E2a:18–20), humans, in fact, are represented in such a way that they live in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit in them (*Beguines* E1:407–409):

> And the Holy Spirit dwells and rests in him in the ground of his humble forsakenness; and we rest and dwell in Him, by means of loving adherence to Him in free veneration. Thus the scale stands even and alike between us and God in love. (*Beguines* E2b:662–665)

In that portrait, *Enclosures* tells us that those who do not or cannot achieve the union in love with God should call upon the Holy Spirit and ask Him to come 'like a mighty fire that burns, consumes, and devours all within Himself, so that man forgets himself and all exercise and he experiences himself only as though he were one spirit and one love with God' (*Enclosures* E764–769). This contrasts with his denunciation of those who 'want to climb up by themselves, without the Spirit of our Lord and His grace' (*Beguines* E2a:70–71). Ruusbroec admonishes them that they are unlikely to find eternal blessedness. He even turns into an accuser of those who reject the Holy Spirit.

In the unitedness with the Spirit of God, human beings 'embrace love with love' and 'shall be by love embraced'; they are possessed by God, and they in turn possess God in unity (*Faith* E225–227). However, thus meeting 'God with God' (*Espousals* Eb1873) and living 'in God as one with God' (*Beguines* E2b:2251–2252) should not be understood in a pantheistic sense. Ruusbroec alludes to being one with God by means of enjoyable love, which, according to him, is the realization of Christ's prayer (Jn. 17:21): 'That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you' (*Realm* E1900–1901). Moreover, the author is of the opinion that the Spirit 'neither wills nor counsels nor performs in anyone things not in conformity with the teaching of Christ and of holy Christendom' (*Espousals* Eb2144–2146).

In many cases, the contemplatives' unity with God's Spirit is stamped by the biblical metaphor 'born or born anew' out of the Holy Spirit and by the expression 'sons or chosen sons of God' (*Mirror* E1628–1635, E1758–1760; *Beguines* E1:529–531, E2a:65–70, E2b:2225–2226). What Ruusbroec has in mind is very well reflected in the citations below. By the help of the expressions 'sons of God' and 'hidden with Christ in God,' we are given a clear synthesis of what it means to be united with God or to be born anew of the Spirit:

> And by means of likeness of good works we are united to God in His fruitful nature, which is always working in threeness of Persons, and brings to completion all good things in unity of His Spirit. There we are dead to sin in one spirit with God. There we are born anew of the Holy Spirit, chosen sons of God. (*Rungs* E1078–1082)

> They do not work, but they are *formed* and wrought by the Spirit of our Lord. They are themselves grace and love; and they are called sons of God. [As to] all who *have died* to themselves in God and who renounce all self-interest in the dearest will of God, their life is hidden with Christ in God, and they are without cease born anew from the Holy Spirit, as *beloved* sons of the love of God above grace and above all their works.

> They have the capacity to be annihilated and to melt *away* in love, for they have become deiform and transformed into Christ and reformed by the Spirit of our Lord. (*Beguines* E1:598–606)

Even though the Holy Spirit plays an important role in the spiritual life, we should not forget that Ruusbroec indicates the necessary community of life with Christ. First, the seven divine gifts by which a person is impelled to a virtuous life are received in Christ's Spirit (*Tabernacle* E5:558–560). The author even portrays Christ as the 'living fountain that flows for us through the Holy Spirit' out of His Father's heart (*Mirror* E1260–1262). Furthermore, the sacraments are an outstanding proof of Christ's work in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Realm* E124–126). In this respect, Ruusbroec recalls the Eucharistic sacrament as that which enables human beings to find within themselves the fruits of the Spirit described by St Paul in his letter to the Galatians (see Gal. 5:22) (*Tabernacle* E5:5376–5399).

Second, Ruusbroec explains that the community of life with Christ enables one 'to feel the strong heat of the Holy Spirit that makes us burn and melt into God's unity' (*Stone* E735–736). The main point is that Christ's Spirit conducts a (good) person with Himself into the unity of God, which is the indwelling of their souls in the Holy Spirit (*Rungs* E142–147). Put differently: the Holy Spirit is the bride-treasure and dowry with which Jesus has made this person an heir in His Father's kingdom (*Mirror* E86–89).

10 The Holy Spirit and the 'Analogy' of the Mystical Life with God's Trinitarian Life

To conclude our analysis of Ruusbroec's manifold treatment of the Holy Spirit, both in its diverse contexts as well as differing emphases, we would like to argue that the contemplative's spiritual relation of love with God is associated with the inner-divine relation of love. Ruusbroec does this by analogously applying his Trinitarian theological views of the Holy Spirit to the superessential or contemplative life, which, as we have shown, is an experience of both the impulse of and union in love with the Holy Spirit. Ruusbroec attempts to illuminate these two aspects by grounding them in God's Trinitarian life of love. On the one hand, he describes the contemplative's living with the Holy Spirit or the sharing in His activity of flowing-out and flowing-back at the level of God's fruitful nature. On the other hand, he situates this mystic's participation in the Holy Spirit within the enjoyable bond or the unity of the Father and the Son, with respect to God's essence.

While the active and inner/yearning life focus on the likeness to God and the Persons of the Trinity (*Espousals* b1589), the superessential/contemplative life concentrates on the similarity between the relation of love in God's self and God's relationship with human beings, which signals an essential identity at the level of love. Ruusbroec's statement appropriately advances by setting the divine and human realities of love side by side.

Participation in the Out-Flowing and Inward-Drawing Love of the Father and the Son

Sharing in the Out-Flowing Love of the Father and the Son

The author's argument that 'out of love, the Father, with the Son, have given us their mutual love, which is the Holy Spirit' (*Tabernacle* E4:216–217; *Mirror* E1935–1938; *Beguines* E2a:397–398), is reminiscent of the *filioque* or Ruusbroec's belief that within God's fruitful nature, love or the Holy Spirit flows forth from the Father and the Son. There is, indeed, a comparable message. Just as the Father and the Son love each other in the out-flowing of the Holy Spirit, so contemplatives or mystics (feel that they) are loved by the Father and the Son in the gushing forth of their Spirit (*Enclosures* E590–591).

The juxtaposition of these two seemingly incompatible 'events' clearly illustrates, moreover, that the Holy Spirit's impulse in the active and yearning life originates from the mutual love of the Father and the Son, that '[b]y means of this out-flowing of the same love out of the Father and out of the Son, all virtues are wrought' (*Realm* E2248–2250), and all works are brought to fulfillment (*Rungs* E988–989). In this way, the active and yearning life's 'resembling' of the Holy Spirit, can be better understood as the Holy Spirit 'who works all the works of love' in the human soul (*Rungs* E600). Ruusbroec even reminds us that 'the Spirit of God demands of our spirit that we exhaust ourselves in love in Him' (*Beguines* E2a:479–480 and E2a:483–484). The upshot in this context, however, is that contemplatives *feel* that they work with and live in the Holy Spirit, and He in them (*Rungs* E1042 and E1122–1126).

The Holy Spirit as Bond of the Father and the Son, and the Mystic

Ruusbroec next comes up with an explanation of the correspondence between the inner-divine bond of the Father and the Son and the bond in which the Father and the Son are united with all beloved (*Espousals* Eb863–865). The notion that the love breathed forth by the Father and the Son constitutes a bond simultaneously between them and also between all good persons (*Espousals* E183–184), indeed, reflects Ruusbroec's opinion that, with respect to God's fruitful nature, the love related to the out-flowing of the Holy Spirit as third Person is, at the same time, the bond in which the Father and the Son are

united in their Spirit. And just as the 'bond and the unity of love between the Father and the Son remains always,' so contemplatives 'remain forever united to God in the bond of love' (*Enclosures* E592–599).

These people are united to God in His fruitful nature, and God is eternally working and simultaneously bringing to completion all good things in unity of His Spirit (*Rungs* E1078–1080). In the unity of the Holy Spirit, mystics thus 'receive the Holy Spirit and the Father and the Son and the divine nature all at once, for God cannot be divided' (*Espousals* Eb1478–1480).

Being Flowed-Out in Virtues and Drawn-Inwards Out of the Unity of the Holy Spirit

Ruusbroec complements the preceding statement by equating the imperative link between the unity of the Holy Spirit and its origin of the inner-divine dynamic of both flowing-out and flowing-back in the Trinity to the correlation between the unity of the Father and the Son and the mystic, and its source of the mystic's out-flowing in virtues and his or her drawing inwards in unity. Both indicate that one and the same unity originates the out-flowing in the Holy Spirit, and in the flowing-back, is an eternal bond of love in the unity of the Holy Spirit. We find the 'analogy' clearly illustrated by the quotations:

> There we feel unity with God in love, in the Holy Spirit. And the unity in love is well-spring and source of all gifts, all virtues, and all holiness and all good works. It always flows with grace, and in each one in particular according to his duties and according to his worth, and according to his modes in which he serves God. And it is drawing inward into unity of love everything that it has bestowed in distinction of grace and of virtues. And unity in love is always constantly inward, unmoved, a fathomless abyss in enjoyment and in blessedness. (*Beguines* E2b:2059–2066)

> There, the Father with the Son and all the beloved are *encompassed* and embraced in the bond of love, that is to say, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. It is this same unity which is fruitful according to the bursting-out of the Persons and in the return, an eternal bond of love which can nevermore be untied. (*Little Book* E328–332)

This confirms Ruusbroec's general Trinitarian statement that the love related to the Holy Spirit as out-flowing 'Person' is not the principle of return of the Father and the Son and the contemplative. All of his works testify that the flowing-back is accomplished by God's self, who draws one with Him into unity of His love (*Beguines* E2a:432–433), or by God's unity in love, in which the

Father and the Son have seized a person in unity of their Spirit (*Rungs* E1125–1126). In Ruusbroec's words:

> God is one in His nature, and His nature is fruitful in threeness of Persons, eternally flowing out, living and working, with distinction of Persons, knowing and loving, creating and making heaven and earth and all creatures. And He is eternally without cease flowing back in again, empty, without activity, in His essence, with eternal Love, in the unity of the holy [*sic*] Spirit. There we are above ourselves one love and one enjoyment with Him: in the out-flowing with grace, He makes us like to Him; and in the in-flowing He draws us with Him into oneness of His love. (*Beguines* E2a:426–433)

Participation in the Embrace of the Father and the Son in the Unity of the Holy Spirit

Ruusbroec records a similar pattern of analogies for the mystic's union (communion) with God, in regard to God's essence. Like the exposition on the bond of love in the Trinity, his reasoning unfolds (implicitly) in two stages. On the one hand, he binds together the mystics' 'fruitful' bond of love with the Father and the Son and their being embraced in the same bond at the level of God's essence. On the other, the divine embrace makes a setting for the enjoyment of all the beloved with the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. This is already suggested in Ruusbroec's first work, *The Realm of Lovers*:

> The fire is the Holy Spirit burning in the furnace of divine unity. In this exalted unity, all spirits are perfused and enlightened through and through in incomprehensible lovingness. This enjoyable unity is the treasure hidden in the field of the soul; whoever digs for it and savors it, sells and renounces himself and all things relating to satisfaction, so that he might possess this field, namely, this bliss. The Holy Spirit is the treasure of God and of the soul; for He is the bond of love and the embrace and the penetration by which the inward-turned spirits are penetrated and embraced in enjoyable unity. (*Realm* E2219–2227)

Ruusbroec's purpose in recounting the contemplative's bond of love as an embrace with the Father and the Son in the unity of their Spirit, indeed, makes for their rest and their blessed enjoyment with the Father and the Son in that same unity of the Holy Spirit (*Espousals* Eb908–916; *Enclosures* E653–654; *Rungs* E1018–1021). It fits his intention to insist in *Espousals* Ec207–208 that the meeting of the Father and of the Son, in which contemplative persons are

lovingly embraced, through the Holy Spirit, in eternal love, is, 'in its ground,' enjoyable and without mode. In a metaphoric passage of *Beguines*, the author, therefore, points out: 'The third heavenly mode is unity with the Father and with the Son and with all the beloved in the Holy Spirit; this is the highest feast in heaven and on earth' (*Beguines* E2c:1233–1235). In this section, the author's understanding of the mystical union in the Holy Spirit clearly takes on the shape and outlook which is aligned to the inner-divine unity of the Holy Spirit, 'where the divine Persons *relinquish their spirits* in unity of their essence, in the fathomless abyss of simple blessedness' (*Rungs* E1091–1092). In the mystic's 'going in in an inactive enjoyment' in the Holy Spirit, and the 'going out in good works' with the Holy Spirit, the emphasis, indeed, is on the 'remaining united to the Spirit of God' (*Rungs* E1068–1070).

But the ground of Ruusbroec's setting out on the enjoyment in the Holy Spirit beyond activity (*Realm* E2245) is essentially a witness to the mystic's experience of being one spirit, one love (*Mirror* E892), and one beatitude with God 'without difference' (*Little Book* E398–399). For in the blessed, essential enjoyment of God and all God's beloved, 'the persons and everything that is living in God must yield' (*Espousals* Ec218): 'There, there is neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Spirit, according to personal distinction, nor any creature' (*Little Book* E401–402, *Rungs* E1093). The modeless existence in God's essential being is to be seen as preferred above all things by all inner spirits and it represents the fulfillment of the mystical life.

Ruusbroec's closing exposition witnesses to the characteristic titles granted to the Holy Spirit illustrated with reference to his biblical theology. Taking over its metaphorical language, he uses it to sum up that in the experience of being one in love with God, the 'Holy Spirit is an infinite fire that has transformed and shone through all inward-turned spirits' (*Realm* E2235–2236), that the 'bottomless whirlpool where all noble minds are hanging in (God) in enjoyment, [...] is the resplendent sun that shines and burns in the apex of the soul' (*Realm* E2253–2255), and that the blessed enjoyment itself is 'the living bottomless spring that flows from within outward with seven principal streams' (*Realm* E2257–2258).

In *Faith* E83–85, the author likewise allows us to see the connection between the union of love and the Holy Spirit in the baptismal formula: 'For through the Holy Spirit, who is a bond of love, they are all gathered in one faith, one baptism and one law of commandments and sacraments.'

Finally, Ruusbroec shares with us that his Christology does not stand apart from his Trinitarian mysticism. The result is two 'accounts' with one meaning. Referring to Christ's prayer (Jn. 17:21), the author, in fact, on the one hand underlines that in the embrace with the Father and the Son in the unity of the

Holy Spirit, contemplative human beings are all one, 'in the same way that Christ, God and man, is one with His Father in the fathomless love of them both' (*Mirror* E1981–1984). On the other, he demands that we pray to our heavenly Father so that we with the Father and the Son 'possess their glory in the unity of the Holy Spirit, eternally, without end' (*Rungs* E417–420).

Conclusion

It is clear that Ruusbroec's theological insights into Pneumatology or the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit shape his notion of the Christian spiritual and contemplative life.

Our exploration of the varieties of the accounts on the Holy Spirit—offering an introductory exposition on each of the reference points and giving way for understanding the author's fundamental concerns—has attempted to bring about a renewed approach that bears upon the comprehension of Ruusbroec's mystical writings. We avoided taking his various statements on the Holy Spirit as isolated occurrences. The emphasis, rather, was on 'combining' Ruusbroec's assertions and showing that they move toward one ultimate mystical claim: the embrace of the Father and the Son *and* the contemplative person in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

To heighten the comprehensiveness of this claim, we first showed that the Holy Spirit at the level of creation theology was not an isolated 'topic.' Rather, it unlocks and opens onto other areas that we highlighted. The second and third points, the fields of biblical theology and theology of grace, indeed, reinforced the observation already made about the Spirit's goodness in the first point: the Spirit's characteristic goodness was, respectively, associated with the bestowal in the human soul of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and with God's grace. Fourth, in treating the question of the Holy Spirit at the level of Trinitarian theology, we provided the reader with an additional and more thorough conception of the meaning of the Holy Spirit with respect to content. Turning from the theme of goodness, we outlined Ruusbroec's Trinitarian theological elucidation of the Holy Spirit and recorded, nonetheless, that goodness bestowed in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and indicated as God's in-working grace in the human being, is the Holy Spirit or the love proceeding from the Father and the Son, which, ceaselessly and simultaneously, is their bond.

In taking up the themes of the first four 'topics' considered, Christology was, in the fifth point, described as following Ruusbroec's earlier specifications of the Holy Spirit: Christ's encompassing by the Holy Spirit, His Pentecostal gifts,

and His love for human beings—whether or not through the sacraments—were associated with the mutual love of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit and connected with Christ's prayer, 'That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you' (Jn. 17:21). After subsequently examining Ruusbroec's doctrine of Mary, in the sixth place, we exemplified how Christ's Spirit—sent by Him on the Cross into Mary—mirrored the Holy Spirit's in-working goodness with regards to Mary's annunciation. What was mentioned then about the Holy Spirit's inspiration of Scripture and the Church, in the seventh place, allows for us to assume the natural connection with the Spirit's goodness or God's inward speaking within a human person at the level of grace. And finally, the eighth issue on the baptismal formula completed what had been suggested concerning the Holy Spirit before. It endorses what Ruusbroec regards as the core of his doctrine of the Spirit. We have illustrated how, in his explaining the second baptism of penitence and the renewal of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, Ruusbroec shows that through Baptism human beings are taken up in the Holy Spirit's life so as to be enkindled by His goodness and grace and to become one love with Him in the unity of the Father and the Son. This theological consideration of the Holy Spirit thus hinted at the spiritual and contemplative life discussed in the final two points.

Each of these eight theological reference points merits its own preferential treatment. However, one field proves to be a unifying agent: Ruusbroec's Trinitarian understanding of the Holy Spirit. It is here that the center of Ruusbroec's Pneumatology and his notion of the life in communion with God (*ghemeyne leven*) are to be retrieved. We have thus attempted to specify the core issue of the participation in the life of the Triune God and concluded our reflection on the Holy Spirit with Ruusbroec's depiction of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual and contemplative life. Both 'lives' serve as a reference point in developing and assessing Ruusbroec's Trinitarian mysticism.

We have examined, in our ninth point, how Ruusbroec proceeds in his appraisal of the Christian spiritual life, describing it as a personal relationship of love with God in three levels: the active life, the inner or yearning life, and the superessential or contemplative life. With respect to the first two 'lives,' we learned that a (good) person is moved by the Holy Spirit to exercises of virtue and good works and is touched by Him so as to be changed from within. We then found out that Ruusbroec's views on the Spirit's in-working in the active and inner life also applies to the superessential/contemplative life. We have pointed out that, in the third life, the Spirit is drawing a person inwards and demanding that he or she be one in love with God. Furthermore we have shown that living with the Holy Spirit should not be understood in a pantheistic sense: the union is on the level of love. Ruusbroec's setting out of the three

'phases' also emphasized the necessary community of life with Christ, which suggests the connection between his Trinitarian-theological teaching on the Holy Spirit and the contemplative life.

In our tenth and concluding point, we recognize how Ruusbroec's Trinitarian-theological views on the Holy Spirit are applied to the superessential or contemplative life, thus associating it with the inner divine relation of love: the ultimate concern of his mystical writings. In a detailed exploration, first the contemplative person's living with the Holy Spirit was presented, and his or her sharing in the Spirit's activity of flowing-out. Second, this person's participation in the Holy Spirit as bond or unity of the Father and the Son, with respect to flowing-back, was explained. In that outline, on the one hand, it was shown that there is a correspondence between the out-flowing love of the Father and the Son and the mystics' experience that they are loved by the Father and the Son in the out-flowing of their Spirit. On the other hand, with respect to the flowing-back, the correspondence between the inner-divine bond of the Father and the Son and the bond in which the Father with the Son are united with all the beloved was emphasized. Thus, we have explicated Ruusbroec's emphasis that one and the same bond of love is the source of the out-flowing of the Holy Spirit and in the flowing-back is eternal unity of the Holy Spirit. This has confirmed what Ruusbroec has said about the unity of the Holy Spirit in a Trinitarian-theological perspective. We then emphasized that Ruusbroec, in comparison with his exposition on the bond of love in the Trinity, binds together the mystics' bond of love as regards God's fruitful nature with their embrace in that same bond on the level of God's essence.

We have sought to probe more deeply into Ruusbroec's mystical 'goal,' or what has been called Christian Trinitarian mysticism. Ruusbroec's last assessment on the Holy Spirit, indeed, was taken directly from his Trinitarian-theological viewpoint and confirms his belief that the fully developed contemplative life is, without cease, an experience of the embrace and the enjoyment of all beloved with the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit—or, without cease, that of one spirit and one love with God, without difference.

Ruusbroec, Jordaens, and Herp on the Common Life: The Transformation of a Spiritual Ideal

Rik Van Nieuwenhove

Towards the end of the second book of *Espousals*, Ruusbroec reminds his readers that 'enjoyment and activity (*ghebruken ende werken*) constitute the blessedness of Christ and all his saints.'[1] This is one of the many places in which he expresses one of the distinguishing features of the medieval spirituality of the Low Countries, namely, the spiritual ideal in which activity and rest (or fruition) are in perfect harmony with one another. Ruusbroec's 'common life' is perhaps the best known exponent of this ideal. However, other authors, writing before him (Hadewijch) and after him (e.g., Willem Jordaens), also adopt this dialectic of activity and repose, albeit in different ways.

In order to draw a meaningful comparison between Ruusbroec and his successors I must also examine how they adopt, or fail to adopt, Ruusbroec's theological anthropology and his Christian Neo-Platonic theology of the Image. These comparisons have, hopefully, some scholarly interest in their own right. More important, however, they may teach us something about the changing nature of mystical theology in the late 14th and 15th centuries. I will suggest that in Hendrik Herp's oeuvre we see a subtle move towards a less ontological (or exemplarist) and more psychological-experiential approach.

Before Ruusbroec, Hadewijch had developed a profound spirituality deeply shaped by the divine dynamics of flowing out and drawing in.[2] In *Letter* 17, a profound and beautiful text, she outlines in a couple of verses a dynamic of detachment, on the one hand, and involvement, on the other, which in turn mirrors the divine nature in its pulsating movement: 'Pouring out and keeping back are the pure divinity and the entire nature of Love.'[3] Hadewijch sees the Divinity in terms which are both dynamic and dialectical, that is, as fruitive unity, on the one hand, and activity in the Persons, on the other. In the fruition of Love at the heart of the Deity, 'there never was and never can be any other work than that one fruition . . .'[4] The Persons, in contrast, represent the active, out-going aspect. While the divine justice swallows up all things into itself,

1 *Espousals* Eb2204.

2 The translation is from Hart (1980).

3 *Letter* 17, Hart (1980), p. 82.

4 *Letter* 17, Hart (1980), p. 83.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_009

'yet each Person separately has given out what is proper to him.'[5] Similarly, we are encouraged to be active and yet fruitive, involved and detached. Thus, the fruition of love clearly refers to each of the second pair of the verses ('Do not apply yourself to any one virtue; Perform no particular work; Take nothing under your protection') while the active life refers to the first of the three pair of verses ('Be generous and zealous for every virtue; Fail not with regard to a multitude of things; Have good will and compassion for every need').

John of Ruusbroec will adopt this theme (which has its roots in the Neo-Platonic dynamic of *exitus* and *reditus*), but he will develop it in an even more explicit Trinitarian manner.

John of Ruusbroec and the Common Life

An exposition of Ruusbroec's ideal of the common life is a fairly complex affair. Bernard McGinn has already given a detailed exposition of key themes of Ruusbroec's mysticism in this volume. In what follows, I will briefly revisit two aspects central to Ruusbroec's spiritual ideal of the common life: his original theology of the Trinity; and the rich theological anthropology in which it finds expression.

Trinitarian Theology

Drawing on a rich medieval tradition (Augustinian, Ps.-Dionysian, 12th-century Cistercian, Bonaventurean, and beguine and Rhineland influences), Ruusbroec develops a highly original mystical theology of the Trinity which shapes every aspect of his thought. The Bonaventurean influence shows itself in Ruusbroec's view that the Father generates his Son from the fruitfulness of his paternal nature. From the mutual contemplation of the Father and his Word, the Holy Spirit proceeds as their bond of Love. However, Ruusbroec then introduces an important innovation. He argues that the Holy Spirit, as the bond of Love between Father and Son, is the principle of the return of the divine Persons into their perichoretic unity, from which the whole dynamic process starts all over again. Ruusbroec therefore describes the Trinity as 'an ebbing, flowing sea' in which the Son and the Holy Spirit (a) go out from the Father, then (b) flow back into the divine unity, where (c) they rest in enjoyment or fruition:

5 *Letter* 17, Hart (1980), p. 83.

> For this noble nature that is the principal cause of all creatures is fruitful. Therefore it cannot rest in the unity of the Fatherhood, because of the stirrings (*ghedueren*) of fruitfulness; but it must without cease give birth to the eternal Wisdom, that is, the Son of the Father. Always, without cease, the Son of God was born, and is born, and will remain unborn: nevertheless it is all one Son. Where the Father beholds his Son, the eternal Wisdom, and all things in the same Wisdom: there he has been born and is a Person other than the Father [...] Neither out of the fruitful nature, that is, Fatherhood, nor out of the Father's giving birth to his Son does Love, that is, the Holy Spirit, flow; but out of the fact that the Son is born a Person other than the Father, where the Father beholds him as born, and everything one with him as the life of everything, and the Son, in turn, beholds the Father giving birth and fruitful, and himself, and all things, in the Father—this is seeing and seeing-back in a fruitful nature—from this comes Love, that is, the Holy Spirit, a bond from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father. By this Love, the Persons are embraced and permeated and have flowed back (*wedervloeit*) into that unity out of which the Father without cease is giving birth. Now, even though they have flowed back into unity, there is no abiding, on account of nature's fruitfulness. This birth-giving and this flowing back into unity is the work of the Trinity. Thus, there is threeness of Persons and oneness of nature.[6]

While the Bonaventurean influence is obvious in Ruusbroec's description of the processions of Word and Holy Spirit, Ruusbroec breaks new ground in holding the view that the divine Persons flow back into the divine essence. This is *regiratio* in scholastic Latin, or *wederboeghen* in Middle Dutch. Now, Hadewijch had already alluded to the notion of *regiratio* when she described how the soul flows back into the divine unity. What is different in Ruusbroec's account is that it is the Holy Spirit who is the principle of this return. The Holy Spirit, as the mutual bond of Love between Father and Son, is the unifying principle who initiates the loving return into the divine unity. After all, it belongs to the nature of Love to return what it receives (*Minnen natuere es altoes gheven ende nemen*), not because it feels indebted but, rather, out of sheer gratuity, in order to allow the other to give once more, in a never-ending dynamic of giving and receiving love.[7]

---

6 *Realm* E1515–E1541 (translation partly modified).

7 *Beguines* E2b: 628. See Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 136–138. This important aspect, which informs Ruusbroec's understanding of the economy of salvation and grace in light of the

In an interesting contribution, Lieve Uyttenhove denies that the Holy Spirit is the principle of *regiratio*, arguing that none of the Persons is the principle or source of *regiratio*, i.e., return, to the unity.[8] In her view, God's unity of Persons is the principle of *exitus-reditus*—and not the Holy Spirit. Uyttenhove's reading is interesting, in my view, if only because Ruusbroec's successors also failed to do full justice to his notion of *regiratio* and the role of the Holy Spirit in it. It is, however, an untenable reading, which clashes with some of Ruusbroec's key texts, as the following passage from *Beguines* 2b:38–55 (E2b:36–52) makes clear. Admittedly, in this passage Ruusbroec first contrasts the fruitive divine essence with the active divine nature, but he then goes on to explain quite explicitly that it is the Holy Spirit who is the principle of return of the divine Persons—just as the fruitfulness of the Godhead is squarely located in the Father as the origin of the Trinity:[9]

> Thus you are to mark and understand: the lofty essence of the threeness of God is eternally empty, without activity, and immoveable, according to essential being. But the nature of the Persons is fruitful, eternally active as to the mode of the Persons. For the Father gives birth to his Son as someone other (from him) by his nature; and the Son is born of the Father as the eternal Wisdom of God, an other Person and one in nature with the Father. And the Father with the Son pour forth from themselves the Holy Spirit, who is one nature with them both. And thus there is oneness in nature and otherness in Persons, for in the relations of the Persons there is mutual knowledge and love, flux and reflux between the Father and the Son *by means of the Holy Spirit*, who is the love of them both [. . .] [I]n the reflux of the Persons the oneness of *the Holy Spirit is enjoyable drawing inwards* and containing the Persons above distinction, in an enjoyment of fathomless love that God himself is in being and in nature. (Emphasis mine)

---

gift of the Holy Spirit, and our response to it, is implicitly denied in Lieve Uyttenhove's interpretation.

8 Uyttenhove (2007), especially pp. 408 and 412. See also the chapter by Uyttenhove in this volume. If the divine essence and nature are, indeed, the source of the divine movements (as Uyttenhove claims), it becomes hard to see how one can refute allegations of quaternity against Ruusbroec.

9 For the fruitfulness of the Father as source of the Son, see *Espousals* Ec109–112: 'For as the almighty Father has perfectly comprehended himself in the ground of his fruitfulness, the Son, the eternal Word of the Father, has gone out, as another Person in the Godhead.' See also *Espousals* Eb1212–14; and *Espousals* Eb1779–80: 'The Father is the principle of all Godhead with respect to being and persons.' See also: Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 91–93.

Ruusbroec therefore describes the Trinity as 'an ebbing, flowing sea,' with the Son and the Holy Spirit *going out* from the Father, and then *flowing back* into the divine unity, where they *rest* in enjoyment. This never-ending dynamic of divine going-out, flowing back in, and resting in enjoyment determines every aspect of Ruusbroec's thought, including his ideal of the common life.[10]

Ruusbroec's Spiritual Ideal: The Common Life

This dynamic vision of the Trinitarian life has important implications for the way Ruusbroec conceives of the Christian life. Indeed, in a beautiful passage from his short treatise *The Sparkling Stone*, Ruusbroec outlines how the Trinitarian life shapes our transformation. It is effectively a description—in homely terms—of growing self-transcendence of the human person through participation in the Trinitarian life. Ruusbroec adopts the traditional distinction between hired servant, faithful servants, secret friends, and hidden sons to describe this process.[11]

The *hired servants* only want to serve God for their own gain. They are profoundly self-centered and have no idea what true love is about. Hence 'they always remain alone with themselves.'[12] Even if they fulfill religious obligations, they do so only out of fear, which illustrates their self-love and self-preoccupation (*minnen die si tot hem selven hebben*). They are effectively intent on themselves in all their activities (*want si soeken ende meinen hem selven in al hare werken*). However, when, with God's assistance, they overcome their self-centeredness (*sine eyghenheit*), God becomes their focus, and they are intent upon God in everything they do. Thus they become *faithful servants*.[13]

Faithful servants lead a busy, active life of virtue. They are preoccupied with improving the world. God send his servants out (*God sendt sine knechte uutwert*) for his service 'in all manner of outward (*uutwendighen*) good works.'[14] The language of exteriority and being sent 'outward' is important, for it makes clear that Ruusbroec sees the active life as a participation in the 'out-going'

10 The notion of Love as bestowed and returned molds, for instance, his understanding of the economy of grace: God bestows his grace but we need to 'return' (or respond to) his gift through our charitable works. Similarly, the gift of the God-man can be seen in the same way: God bestows his Son, but in the humanity of the God-man we are allowed to participate in the return of this gift—a perspective which allows us to interpret the Cross and the Eucharist in terms of the Trinitarian dynamic of Love bestowed and returned. See Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 138–156.

11 See Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 67–70.

12 *Stone* E226–234.

13 *Stone* E256f.

14 *Stone* E274.

dimension of the Trinity (the generation of Son and procession of Holy Spirit). He explicitly makes the link between the active life and its out-going dimension: 'This is called an outward life, or an active life' (*een uutwendich leven ochte een werkende leven*).[15]

The faithful servants remain, however, interiorly unenlightened and know little of a loving and fervent adherence to God. The latter is a feature of the *friends*: they are drawn inwards (*inweert*), attracted to an interior, spiritual life.[16] Ruusbroec contrasts the active life of the servants with the inner life of the friends in terms of exteriority, or out-going, and interiority and being drawn within: God invites the friends inward (*roept ende noedt . . . inweert*).[17] The faithful servants are too preoccupied with, or distracted (in the Pascalian sense of *divertissements*) by, their works (*verbeelt met den werken*), and these become a source of self-satisfaction to them. But the interior life, symbolized by the secret friends, has its own temptations. The friends remain too preoccupied (*verbeelt*) with themselves and their interior practices. Religion and the spiritual consolations it offers may become a source of attachment in their own right. In that case devotion itself—or, rather, the self-centeredness that accompanies it—may become a hindrance in our transformation. It is only the hidden *sons* who have attained the utter detachment or selflessness which allows them to rest in God with a love which is its own reason. Ruusbroec describes this as a passing away of the self and its possessiveness, in God (*in gode ghestorven haers selves ende alre eyghenscap*).[18] Whereas the faithful servants lead an active life (i.e., a life of charitable activity), and the friends an interior or God-yearning life, the hidden sons lead a contemplative life.[19]

There is nothing particularly original about these metaphors of servants, friends, and sons. They are inspired by John Cassian (from a passage in the *Conferences* where he comments on the story of the prodigal son) and were adopted by Bernard of Clairvaux.[20] There are, however, two aspects which make Ruusbroec's outline of particular interest to us. First, he points out that these dimensions of the spiritual life do not cancel one another out. That is:

---

15 *Stone* E267–268.

16 *Stone* E271–274.

17 *Stone* 325–326.

18 *Stone* 429.

19 *Stone* 477–78. Ruusbroec sometimes calls it a super-essential life; he adopts the Pseudo-Dionysian term 'super-essential' because this life perfectly reflects, and participates in, our archetypal existence as idea in the Word.

20 See John Cassian, *Conferences*, XI, vii.1–6; and Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, chs 13–14.

even the sons must still be servants (i.e., lead an active life) and friends (i.e., lead an inward or interior life). This implies that the contemplative life is not the highest life for Ruusbroec. The most perfect life is, rather, a life which combines all three dimensions. Ruusbroec calls this 'the common life' (perhaps better translated as 'universal' or 'catholic' life), which combines a life of charitable activity with that of contemplation. I will come back to how Ruusbroec understands this combination. Second, what is profoundly original is the Trinitarian interpretation Ruusbroec gives to these different dimensions of the spiritual life. By living the common or universal life (which integrates the active, inner, and contemplative lives), we are living the life of the Trinity in its active or out-going, in-going, and fruitive aspects. This is a crucial aspect of Ruusbroec's spirituality—and it is exactly this aspect which some of his followers will fail to appreciate fully.

In short, the active life of the faithful servants, as a life of virtue and external activity, mirrors the 'out-going' aspect of the Trinity (the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit). The inner or God-yearning life of the friends from *The Sparkling Stone* mirrors the 'in-going' aspect of the divine Persons (*regiratio*) at the heart of the Trinity. The contemplative life of the hidden sons, in which we possess God in utter emptiness of self, detached and totally focused on God, mirrors the 'fruition' or enjoyable 'rest' of the divine Persons in their perichoretic unity. The common life, then, is a combination of these aspects. This is how Ruusbroec describes this integration of activity and rest in the common life:

> God's Spirit breathes us out (*blaest ons ute*) to love and perform virtuous works, and he draws us back into him (*trect ons weder in*) to rest and enjoy: this is an eternal life, just like in our bodily life we breathe air in and out [...] to *go in*, in idle enjoyment, and to *go out* with works, and *always remaining united* with God's Spirit: that is what I mean. Just like we open and close our bodily eyes, so quick that we do not feel it, likewise we die in God and live from God, and constantly remain one with God. Thus we will *go out* into our ordinary life and *go in* with love and cleave to God, and always remain *united* with God in stillness.[21]

Ruusbroec's ideal of the common life echoes and radicalizes Gregory the Great's ideal of the *vita mixta* (the mixed life) in which charitable activity and contemplation are in perfect harmony with one another. But how, exactly, are

21 *Rungs* 1121–32 (my translation and italics).

we to understand this? How can we both enjoy and rest in God, and yet be active?

I have argued elsewhere that Ruusbroec's language of 'enjoying God' or 'resting in God' (he treats the expressions as synonymous) recalls the Augustinian distinction between *frui* and *uti*.[22] Augustine's notion of fruition of God refers to a radical theocentric focus we should adopt in all our dealings with the world. Only God should be our *ultimate* concern. Similarly, Ruusbroec explains the notion of 'enjoying God' by developing the notion of the single intention (*die eenvuldighe meyninghe*), or theocentric focus. 'Resting in God' means that our love and knowledge have to be solely focused on God: 'Whoever is not intent on God and does not love him above himself and all things (*die gode niet en meynt noch mint boven hem selven ende boven alle dinc*) will always be reckless and not heed the honor of God and all true virtue and God himself.'[23] In his small treatise *Temptations*, Ruusbroec stresses the importance of 'dying to the own will,' 'breaking the bonds of disorderly affections for creatures,'[24] etc., so as to be raised above ourselves, 'free in mind, unhindered, above all things into the eternal Good that is our inheritance and our bliss.'[25] Again he emphasizes the importance of an intention (*meyninghe*) or disposition, which focuses solely on God and which does not allow for disordered creaturely distractions or attachments. Once we realize that the contemplative aspect of enjoyment of God refers to a theocentric focus or intention, we can begin to understand how this aspect can be combined with a life of virtue. Fruition of God refers to a radical theocentric focus in all our activities and practices (be they acts of virtue or more devotional acts). As Ruusbroec puts it succinctly: 'therefore he has a common life, for contemplation and action come just as readily to him and he is perfect in both.'[26] While Ruusbroec shares the ideal of a harmonious synthesis of activity and contemplation with Hadewijch, he has further developed it in a Trinitarian way, by interpreting the common life as a participation in the *exitus*, *reditus*, and fruition of the divine Persons.

---

22 See Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 61–66. Incidentally, Augustine too had associated enjoyment and rest, as in the following quotation from *De Trin*. X, 13: 'We enjoy things we know when the will reposes (*conquiescit*) in them because it is delighted by them for their own sakes; we use things when we refer them to something else we should enjoy. And what makes the life of men vicious and reprehensible is nothing but using things badly and enjoying them badly.' Transl. by Hill (1994), p. 296.

23 *Temptations* E44–46.

24 *Temptations* 292–294, 329–330, 39–40, 302–305.

25 *Temptations* E293–294.

26 *Stone* E791–792.

A Trinitarian and Exemplarist Anthropology

As indicated, the common life can rightly be considered as a participation in the intra-Trinitarian dynamics in its threefold dimension (going-out, going-in, and fruition). But Ruusbroec also describes in some detail how this Trinitarian dynamics shapes our *process* of transformation. In other words, the journey towards the common life is, itself, also deeply informed by the Trinitarian dynamics. And the reason why this is the case, is that the soul is a Trinitarian blueprint, that is, it is made in the image of the Trinity. This Image is the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, and in this divine Image 'all creatures have an eternal life without themselves, as in their exemplar' (*als in haren eewighen exemplare*).[27]

In his *Mirror*, commenting on Jn. 1:3–4, Ruusbroec elaborates on this exemplarism:

> And that life is nothing but the image of God, in which God has eternally known all things, and that is also the cause of all creatures. And thus this image, which is the Son of God, is eternal, before all createdness. And to this eternal image we are all made; for according to the noblest part of our soul, that is the ground of our higher faculties, there we are made as a living eternal mirror of God, whereupon God has impressed his eternal image, and wherein no other image can ever come. The mirror always remains before the countenance of God. And therefore it is eternalized by the image it has received. In this image God knew us before we were created, in himself, and now, created in time, unto himself. This image is essentially and personally in all people, and every person has it whole and entire, undivided; [...] [in God's image as our origin] our created being and our life hang without intermediary as in its eternal cause. Yet our createdness does not become God, nor (does) the image of God become creature; for we are created unto the image, that is: to receive the image of God. And that image is uncreated, eternal: the Son of God [...] The highest (part) of our soul is always prepared, for it is bare and unassailed by images, always seeing its beginning and inclining toward it. And therefore it is an eternal living mirror of God, always without cessation receiving the eternal birth of the Son, the image of the Holy Trinity, in which God knows himself: all that he is according to his essence and according to the Persons [...]. And this image we all have as an eternal life, without ourselves, before our createdness. And in our createdness that image

27 *Espousals* Ec131–132.

> is the superessential being of our essence (*overwesen ons wesens*) and is eternal life.[28]

Ruusbroec is at pains to argue two points: on the one hand, our created being is distinct from God: 'our createdness does not become God.' On the other hand, he attempts to make clear that the apex of our soul is one with God and can only be properly understood in relation with God. Our eternal life in the Image of God is the ground of our created being.

In the passage we have just quoted, Ruusbroec writes that 'the highest (part) of our soul is always prepared, for it is bare and unassailed by images, always seeing its beginning and inclining toward it.' In *Espousals*, Ruusbroec describes in more detail how the topmost part of our soul tends towards its source, i.e., how the faculties are recollected in response to the operation of grace. As we will see, it is this aspect (which some scholars have called a 'phenomenological' description of the transformative efficacy of grace upon the soul) his followers will retain.

Before I proceed to discuss this 'phenomenological' aspect of Ruusbroec's outline I need to indicate how Ruusbroec describes the union between our exemplarist existence as idea in the Word, and our creaturely existence:

> This eternal life which we eternally have and are in God apart from ourselves is a cause of our created being in time. Our created being depends upon this eternal being and is one with it in its essential subsistence. This eternal being and life which we have and are in God's eternal Wisdom is like God, for it both abides eternally and without distinction in the divine essence and, through the birth of the Son, flows forth eternally as a distinct entity.[29]

In order to explain how our life as idea in God impacts our created life, Ruusbroec describes three 'unities' in the human soul, namely, the unity of heart, an active (or real) unity, and an essential unity. The unity of heart is the seat of the five senses and all bodily activity; it is the animating or life-giving element in the soul.[30] The so-called 'active unity' is the ground of the three faculties, memory, intellect, and will. This unity, however, is intimately linked with our eternal life in God as divine idea.[31] The unity of the active unity (our

28 *Mirror* E847–882.

29 *Espousals* c135–141, trans. Wiseman (1985), p. 149.

30 *Espousals* b57–b64.

31 *Espousals* b50–b58.

created mind with the three faculties) with our eternal life in God is called the 'essential unity,' which is indistinctly one with God's Image: 'The first and highest unity is in God; for all creatures hang in this unity with their being, life and subsistence.'[32] In accordance with his exemplarist anthropology, Ruusbroec can claim that at the core of our being we are a relation, intimately linked to our eternal idea or image in God. It is here, 'in the most intimate and highest part of our being,' that we receive the impress of our eternal Image.[33] This is a natural nobility we have at the core of our being, rendering us neither holy nor blessed; but it is the foundation on which grace can operate so as to transform us.[34] In the second book of *Espousals*, Ruusbroec describes in detail how grace transforms the three unities, affecting our lower sensibility and recollecting our faculties into their unity.[35] (More specifically: he discusses the influx of grace on the unity of heart in *Espousals* b212–971; the influx of grace on the active unity in *Espousals* b972–1404; and the operation of grace on the essential unity in *Espousals* b1602). For Ruusbroec, the soul, through its intimate natural union with its existence as divine idea in the Image of God, is already naturally disposed towards receiving the influx of grace. The exemplarist view on the soul implies that there is a natural foundation ('The highest part of our soul is always prepared') for the transformative operation of grace on the three faculties and the unity of the spirit.

Transformation Through the Influx of Grace

In a major passage from *Espousals* b836ff, Ruusbroec sketches in some detail how the influx of grace transforms the three faculties which are 'located' in the active unity.[36] He describes how the influx of grace in our *memory* raises us 'above all multiplicity and busyness and produces simplicity' or one-foldness (*eenvoldecheit*) in us.[37] It frees us from restlessness and instability (*onghestadicheiden*).

---

32 *Espousals* Eb36–Eb38.

33 *Espousals* b1630.

34 *Espousals* b47–b48; Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 101–110.

35 *Espousals* b69f.

36 'Now we are going to speak further about the second mode of the coming of Christ in inward practice, with which a person is enhanced and enlightened and enriched with respect to the three higher faculties of the soul. We will liken this coming to a living fountain with three streams. This fountain, from which these streams flow forth, is the fullness of the grace of God in the unity of our spirit. There grace behaves (both) essentially, with respect to (its) indwelling, like a brimful fountain; (and) actively, with respect to (its) out-flowing with streams, into each faculty of the soul according to its needs.'

37 *Espousals* b988–b989.

The second river of grace illuminates the *intellect*.[38] Previously Ruusbroec had described the effects of grace upon our lower sensibility (the unity of heart)[39] and had elaborated on feelings of abandonment, consolation, *orewoet* or burning desire, spiritual drunkenness, rapture, etc. In contrast, the influx of grace in the intellect is beyond those kinds of effects on our lower sensibility.[40] The illumination of grace on the intellect provides a good opportunity for Ruusbroec to summarize his theology of the Trinity. Clearly, illumination of the intellect draws us nearer to the mystery of the triune God. It also assists us in comprehending the mysteries of the Scriptures.[41] The third stream enlivens the faculty of *will*, stirring us to love God and our fellow humans.

This is how Ruusbroec summarizes the operation of the three streams on the three faculties:

> By the first stream, that is, a one-fold light, the memory is lifted above (any) irruption of the senses, and set and established in the unity of the spirit. By the second stream, that is, infused clarity, the intellect and reason are enlightened in order to know with distinction many a mode of the virtues and practice, and the mystery of Scripture. By the third stream, that is, an inspired fervor, the superior will is enkindled in silent love and endowed with great riches. Thus this person becomes a spiritually enlightened person. For the grace of God is present as a fountain in the unity of spirit. And the streams cause an out-flowing in the faculties, with all virtues. And the fountain of grace always demands a flowing back into the same ground from which that flow issues.[42]

After he has outlined the transformation of the three faculties, Ruusbroec describes the touch of God's grace in the supreme unity of our spirit. This theme, inspired by Hadewijch and adopted by Herp, was to influence the Spanish mystics. Because of this touch (*gherinen*), the unification of the higher faculties (*eeninghe der overster crachten*) in the unity of the spirit occurs.[43] It commands the understanding to know God in his brightness, and it draws the faculty of loving to enjoy God without intermediary.[44] While Jordaens is

38 *Espousals* b1008–b1109.
39 *Espousals* b212–b971.
40 *Espousals* b1017–b1021.
41 *Espousals* b1124.
42 *Espousals* Eb962–Eb972.
43 *Espousals* b1477–b1479.
44 *Espousals* b1497–b1499.

clearly indebted to Ruusbroec's outline of the transformation of the three faculties, he does not adopt Ruusbroec's description of the divine touch in the inner unity of our soul.[45]

It seems to me that the phenomenological description of the transformative power of grace on the three faculties (i.e., the transformation of the three faculties, and their inward movement—whereby they are being 'drawn in' or recollected) will be retained by Ruusbroec's followers. But while adopting this phenomenological description they will downplay two crucial aspects of Ruusbroec's overall mystical theology: the exemplarist grounding; and the ideal of the common life as a participation in the intra-Trinitarian dynamics. When the Neo-Platonic, exemplarist perspective declines after Ruusbroec (for instance, in the writings of Herp), the union with God will increasingly lend itself to being interpreted in more experiential terms. Indeed, it is significant that Herp does not even mention the ideal of the common life anymore. Before we turn to Herp, let us first discuss the work of Ruusbroec's contemporary, Willem Jordaens.

Willem Jordaens and *De oris osculo* (*The Kiss of Mouth*)

The treatise *The Kiss of Mouth*, written in Middle Dutch, is usually attributed to Willem Jordaens. Jordaens joined the Augustinian canons at Groenendaal (where John of Ruusbroec was prior) around 1352 and stayed there for the remainder of his life (†1372). Jordaens was the first translator of Ruusbroec's writings into Latin. *The Kiss of Mouth* itself is clearly influenced by Ruusbroec. Nonetheless, Jordaens is a fairly independent author who has absorbed and interpreted Ruusbroec's thought in his own distinctive way, creating an original and highly attractive spiritual treatise of his own. While Herp merely *summarizes* and often simply inserts large extracts from Ruusbroec's writings, Jordaens *interprets* and produces an original work.

The First Two Phases: Mutual Gazing and Conversing

The Kiss of Mouth is a relatively short work—around 150 pages in the edition of L. Reypens.[46] In what follows I will not attempt to summarize the whole work but will mainly focus on the climax of the spiritual journey. However, it is important to dwell on the structure of the book—if only because it indicates

45 See *Espousals* b1466f. and b2108f. In *De oris osculo*, nº 143, Jordaens mentions the notion of touch or (*gherinen*) in relation to the operation of the Holy Spirit on the will.

46 The Middle Dutch text can be found in Jordaens, *Mondkus* (1967).

that the triad structure of the common life (in terms of active, interior, and contemplative lives), which shaped Ruusbroec's oeuvre, has not been retained.

The first part deals with the mutual gaze (*ondersien*) of the lovers (i.e., the soul and God). This is followed by the mutual conversing (*onderspreken*) of the soul and God. The third part is the phase of *vriendelijcken*, the befriending of God and the soul. It is when describing this phase that Jordaens outlines how the three Persons of the Trinity draw the faculties into deeper unity—a passage we will discuss in greater detail below. The fourth phase, the kiss of mouth, is the spiritual union between God and the soul.[47]

The mutual gazing is the phase of purification in the broad sense of the word, and it corresponds only roughly with Ruusbroec's active life. For Ruusbroec, the active life refers both to a life of virtue as well as to our moral self-disciplining and ascetic preparation. It is the latter aspect which Jordaens stresses in the phase of 'gazing.' The soul has to examine whether she is 'adorned with virtues' and is invited to purify the eyes of her soul

> from the whims of alien pleasure, from coveting the things of this world, from the darkness of irascibility and envy, from the haze of pride, from the winds of vainglory, and purify them from every alien image, in order that she may become a clear mirror in which the Bridegroom can cast his image.[48]

There is also a characteristically intellectual dimension, even to this first phase. Jordaens is rather concerned with dispelling inaccurate images of God, and a strong negative-theological vein runs through his work.[49] This is a theme to which he will return throughout the treatise.[50] Moreover, Jordaens puts a strong emphasis on the right desire for God when discussing this first phase.[51] For Ruusbroec, this element belongs to the inner or God-yearning life.

---

47 *De oris osculo*, n° 2. All translations are mine. I have translated chapters 1–3 and 11 in Van Nieuwenhove, Faesen & Rolfson (2008), pp. 1–34. Again, towards the end of the book Jordaens summarizes (*De oris osculo*, n° 242): 'See, my soul, now I have explained, in writing, how you will enjoy with God a mutual seeing (*ondersien*), a friendly speaking (*vriendelijck onderspreken*), a mutual befriending (*vriendelijcken*), and a divine kissing (*ondercussen*). If you fulfill this, aided by God's grace, through works, you will preserve yourself and me . . .'

48 *De oris osculo*, n° 3 & 7.

49 *De oris osculo*, n° 3: God is 'an utterly incomprehensible nameless nothing.'

50 *De oris osculo*, n° 111–139 (with explicit reference to Ps.-Dionysius in 120) and 199.

51 *De oris osculo*, n° 7.

Drawing on Saint Bernard, Jordaens describes the transition between the first phase and the second phase by using the image of kissing the Lord's feet: the foot of truth (which exposes our sinfulness), and the foot of mercy, the source of God's grace. Like Bernard before him, Jordaens argues that a mature religious life implies both fear of the Lord (awe) and trust in his love for us.[52] After the soul has begun to mourn her sinfulness and failings, and is determined to live in accordance with the truth, she is invited to listen to the Lord (the phase of mutual conversing).[53]

Pursuing the analogy of kissing, the soul is now invited in this phase to kiss the hands of the Lord, which means 'to do works of righteousness in the still satiety of your [= the Lord's] peace.'[54] The right hand of the Lord refers to the performance of manifold virtuous works, while thirsting to promote God's justice. This section contains a beautiful excursus on the nature of magnanimity.[55] The left hand symbolizes the inner peace God bestows upon us.[56] We do not need to elaborate on the details of Jordaens' discussion.[57] It is clear that the mutual conversing between God and soul does not seamlessly correspond to any of the aspects of Ruusbroec's spiritual life (i.e., active, inner or contemplative).

The Befriending of God and Soul

The soul, then, having kissed the hands and feet, finds the courage to befriend her lover, or to act in a friendly manner towards him (*vriendelijcken*).[58] When discussing this phase, Jordaens describes a growing incorporation of the soul into the Body of Christ. The soul will engage in radical solidarity with the most humble and needy members of Christ's body. Inspired by Gregory the Great (*Hom. in Ev. 33*) Jordaens identifies them (perhaps somewhat confusingly, given the use of this analogy in an earlier part) with the feet of the Body of Christ. In this context Jordaens develops the dimension of pursuing virtue—a central aspect of Ruusbroec's active life—by referring to the need to serve one's beloved, rather than in terms of the outgoing movement of the divine Persons (as Ruusbroec had done). So we find him driving home the point that we must be both active and contemplative, and he disapproves of those people

52 *De oris osculo*, n° 11–12.
53 *De oris osculo*, n° 16.
54 *De oris osculo*, n° 24.
55 *De oris osculo*, n° 29–54.
56 *De oris osculo*, n° 55–70.
57 For a brief summary, see Ruh (1999), pp. 87–99.
58 *De oris osculo*, n° 71f.

who want to lead the contemplative life while refusing to engage in the active life and works of virtue. Without an active life of virtue, our contemplation loses its foundation (*fondament*).[59] Any reader of Ruusbroec will recognize the theme. Indeed, in this context Jordaens explicitly adopts the notion of the common life (*een ghemeyn leven*). But the difference is that Jordaens develops this theme by drawing on his metaphor of kissing: 'they want to kiss the mouth of their lover, but they do not want to friendly engage with [Christ's] members through humble service.'[60] Thus, to make a case for the common life, he appeals to Christ's example (as Ruusbroec had also done) but does not develop the Trinitarian dimension.[61]

Before he describes the climax of the transformation of the soul, i.e., the kiss of mouth, Jordaens discusses in Chapter ten (n° 140–198) how the Trinity draws the three faculties of the soul into its unity. To this passage, clearly indebted to Ruusbroec, we now turn.[62]

The *Holy Spirit* draws the loving faculty (i.e., the will[63]) through the imprint of its goodness and love: 'In this friendly embrace the soul is touched and she ignites in love, and the supreme power of desire, that is the loving faculty of the soul, is drawn upwards by the heat of the Holy Spirit, who has shone on the soul with the light of his goodness and love . . .'[64] Jordaens explains this metaphor of heat in greater detail: as heat comes from the sun, and shines upon things, thereby fructifying them, so too the Holy Spirit bestows its love upon the loving faculty and draws it back up towards God's unfathomable goodness.[65] Thus, the Holy Spirit effects a movement towards unity in the soul. But Jordaens, unlike Ruusbroec, does not say that the Holy Spirit himself returns to the Father. He is more interested in the effects of this attraction or 'pull' by the Holy Spirit on the soul.

Jordaens makes clear, quoting Lk. 10:27, that the undivided, proper, and unmixed intention (*meyninghe*) with which we love God is central to this return, as it was for Ruusbroec.[66] By 'unmixed' intention, Jordaens means that 'in our adoration of God we will never be seeking, or be concerned with, alien

59 *De oris osculo*, n° 80.
60 *De oris osculo*, n° 76.
61 *De oris osculo*, n° 76.
62 See *Espousals* b972–b1404.
63 *De oris osculo*, n° 169.
64 *De oris osculo*, n° 143.
65 *De oris osculo*, n° 144.
66 *De oris osculo*, n° 161.

creaturely things, nor savor, or seek comfort and consolation, or temporal or eternal good, but solely God's honor.'[67]

As the Holy Spirit draws or pulls the will, so too the *Son* draws in the intellect. The Son, as the perfect Image of God, demands of the soul a growth in likeness through the bestowal of wisdom. It is only through the Son, the Image of the Father, that we can approach the Father.[68] Because both the Son and all creatures owe everything they are and have to the Father, the Father exerts an attraction on all created things:

> The Father is also the origin and the cause of all creatures he has made in his Word, who is his Son. And therefore, all creatures are drawn to him as their origin and their first cause from which they have emanated (*vvtghevloten*) in their createdness, and they desire to attain likeness with him, in accordance with their capacity and proper mode. Therefore, they all call out with natural desire: 'Show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' (Jn. 14:8)[69]

Unlike the Son and the Spirit, who have been sent in historical missions into our world, the Father has not been revealed in our world, which is why he is more inaccessible and unknown (*ontoeganckelijcker ende onbekendelijcker*) to us than the other two Persons. He does, however, send the Son and the Holy Spirit—or Wisdom and Love—to make him known and loved.[70] Jordaens then goes on to summarize the generation of the Son from the Father: in understanding himself, the Father has generated his Word or his Image as a distinct Person who, nonetheless, shares and subsists in the same divine nature. Jordaens' teaching is obviously indebted to St Augustine, to whom he explicitly refers.[71] Because the Son is not simply the Image of the Father but also the Word in which the Father has made and expressed all things, the Son is also the Exemplar of all created things. This is why the Son is more accessible to us, intellective creatures than the Father.[72]

Even though the Son was partly revealed in the Scripture (especially in Wisdom literature) he still remained largely unknown, and therefore the

67 *De oris osculo*, n° 162.

68 *De oris osculo*, n° 169.

69 *De oris osculo*, n° 170.

70 *De oris osculo*, n° 171. Jordaens quotes Wis. 9:17 [Vulg.]: 'And who shall know thy thought except thou give wisdom, and send the Holy Spirit from above.'

71 *De oris osculo*, n° 174–175.

72 *De oris osculo*, n° 175–176.

Father sent him to assume a human nature. Thus, 'through our knowledge of the knowable image [of the Son's humanity] we would be able to attain knowledge of his [= the Father's] unknown divine Image, and hence arrive at knowledge of his hidden paternity.'[73] Thus, the Son draws us in towards the Father:

> If anyone wants to see the Father, he should look at me (cf. Jn. 14:9) and become like me in accordance with the perfection of my humanity; and he should raise his sensible nature and all his faculties above earthly pleasure, as I have taught, and accept in faith that I am the divine Image of the Father. For when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things (that is: all that is the human person) to myself (cf. Jn. 12:32), namely, unto my likeness, through the lovable object of the Wisdom of God, which I am myself. For when our intellective eyes are lifted up into the pure receptive mind (*die bloete opene ghedachte*) before the presence of the incomprehensible Wisdom of God, then many an image of divine perfection is imprinted into us through the gift of Wisdom, and we notice in the bright mirror an utterly holy life, in accordance with perfection.[74]

The Word draws the intellect into union. This attraction or recollection of the intellect will lead to a growing conformity or likeness of the soul with God.[75] While Jordaens quotes several passages from John's Gospel in which Christ states that he will draw the faithful into him,[76] it is in one place only that he suggests that the Second Person himself is drawn back towards the Father.[77]

---

73 *De oris osculo*, nº 176.

74 *De oris osculo*, nº 178.

75 *De oris osculo*, nº 180–183. Quoting Augustine's dictum 'The word which we wish to discuss is the divine wisdom and a knowledge with love,' Jordaens goes on to explain the implications of the drawing by the divine Wisdom on our loving faculty. The perichoresis (mutual indwelling) of love and knowledge leads to a growing desire to discard all unlikeness so as to attain a complete likeness with our 'exemplary' perfection (*een volmaect exemplaer*). The editor, Leonce Reypens failed to trace the source in Augustine. It is from *De Trin.* IX, nº 15: 'The kind of word then that we are now wishing to distinguish and propose is "knowledge with love." '

76 In *De oris osculo*, nº 177, he quotes Jn. 12:32, which reads, in the Vulgate: *Et ego, si exaltus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum*.

77 *De oris osculo*, nº 192, in which the soul addresses God as follows: ' "Show me the Father and it is enough for me." And even though the Son answers her: "Do you not know me? He that sees me sees the Father also," the soul answers him, saying: "You yourself are returning unto (*wederkeerende tot*) your Father (together with all creatures insofar as they are a divine life in you—as the first-born art (*conste*) and wisdom of the Father—) as

It is unclear, however, whether this refers to the immanent return (*regiratio* of the Son within the heart of the Trinity) or, perhaps more plausibly, to the historical-economic return of the Son (through the resurrection and ascension). At any rate, a *regiratio* of the Holy Spirit does not occur in Jordaens' treatise.

The *Father* draws the memory of the soul (*die ghedachte der zielen*) into a one-fold unity in two ways: first, through faith in the Son and the Holy Spirit.[78] Faith leads to insight: while the nature of the Father cannot be comprehended in rational categories, we can obtain real insight in him through faith.[79]

The second attraction or 'drawing' by the Father occurs through purity of heart—with an explicit reference to the beatitude: 'Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God.' It involves a purification of the heart. The 'heart' refers to the intellective mind (*verstandeghe gedachten*) with which we can see the Father, not (in this life) in his pure divine being but in a way beyond comprehension through a divine, patriform (*vader-formegehen*) image.[80] The soul now abides in the presence of the Father, and attains peace. This is the climax of the mutual befriending of God and soul.

The Kiss of Mouth

Jordaens contrasts the kiss of mouth, or ultimate union with God and final phase, with the previous stage in the following terms:

> Now I would like to show you, my poor soul, how you can attain the kiss of mouth from God, which is the most supreme fruit in this life. For everything that I have said so far, is nothing but a mutual befriending (*ondervriendelijcken*) between God and soul, in images and likenesses, in accordance with the knowledge of the quiddity of God which we can

---

into your origin, from which you flow out without cease through the eternal speech by the Father's understanding; and you always remain within, and you always flow out with everything that lives in you, for you yourself state that you are in the Father and the Father is in you." '

78 *De oris osculo*, n° 190. In this context Jordaens quotes Jn. 6:44 (Vulg.): 'No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him' (*traxerit eum*).

79 *De oris osculo*, n° 191. 'And therefore, although the Father is (as I mentioned earlier), utterly inaccessible and unknowable to us in this life according to intellective understanding, he is most accessible and knowable according to the simple insight of faith [. . .] Through the simple insight of faith we come to an intellective understanding (*verstandeghen begrijpe*) of things divine and eternal, in deiform (*godformeghen*) images and similitudes. This is why Isaiah says: "Unless you believe you will not understand" ' (Is. 43:10).

80 *De oris osculo*, n° 194. I apologize for the neologism: as I translated *god-formeghe* as deiform, I now must translate *vader-formegehe* as patriform or 'father-like' form.

> attain in this life, that is: with which we understand what God is. But the kiss of mouth between God and soul occurs in the perfection of the knowledge what God is not, and this is a perfect unknowing of God.[81]

A first major difference between the previous stages and the ultimate union with God is that the latter is characterized by imagelessness. In the previous stages, the soul only knew God's attire but not his countenance, and she now strips all images from her intellectual eyes, 'climbing with her mind in a darkness devoid of images,' standing in 'perfect unknowing of God.'[82] The soul is caught up in a twilight zone, 'between two tables': on the one hand, there is knowledge of God through created things and images, and this no longer appeals to her; on the other hand, there is the higher table, in which God can be known in his 'naked, glorious essence,' but she cannot reach this 'as long as she remains in this mortal life.'[83] God then offers the soul his mouth to be kissed, and the soul 'becomes deified.'[84]

In order to describe the nature of this deification, Jordaens returns to the theme of activity and rest which we encountered in the writings of Hadewijch and Ruusbroec. Indeed, he explains it beautifully by making an illuminating comparison with the operation of the senses. Like Ruusbroec before him, Jordaens shuns quietism. He distinguishes this false kind of rest from true rest in the following manner:

> We can say that those who claim that the most noble life on earth or the most blissful life in the heavenly realm is to be found in an empty [or unhindered] rest (*eenre ledegher rusten*) without activity or beyond activity, are in grave error [...] I definitely reject the fact that they situate holiness and bliss beyond activity or without activity. For inactive emptiness (*werckeloese ledicheyt*), in a pure being of the powers, is compared by St Paul to nothingness, and by St John to death [...] I do teach that the perfection of the active existence of the soul consists in some kind of free resting (*in eender ledegher rusten*). For the most profound rest and the noblest inactivity (*ledicheyt*) which the soul can enjoy in this life and in

81 *De oris osculo*, nº 199.

82 *De oris osculo*, nº 200–201.

83 *De oris osculo*, nº 201. The metaphor of the tables, although originally found in Ruusbroec will be adopted by Herp from Jordaens. See Moereels (1974b).

84 *De oris osculo*, nº 217.

> eternal life, she attains in the perfect activity (*volmaecten wercken*) of her perfect powers when oriented towards pleasurable objects.[85]

Jordaens' ideal of rest is highly dialectical: it actually implies activity! This may sound paradoxical, but the analogy he develops is rather helpful. I include a long citation:

> In the sensible powers you will notice something similar. When the five senses are properly disposed and have pleasurable objects in front of them, then the senses find their rest (*ruste*) in the very fact that they are active. Indeed, the soul would suffer major unrest (*onruste*) if she were to be prevented from engaging in this activity. So the soul enjoys more rest when engaging in these activities than when she abstains from them. For it comes natural to the soul to engage in activity, whereas abstaining from it is due to fragility and weakness of nature. For in this life our instruments (such as the senses) cannot engage continually in activity due to fatigue. This is why nature demands us occasionally to abandon our activity, and this is why we need inactivity and rest (*ledicheyt ende ruste*). Thus the instruments or senses do not rest for the sake of rest and inactivity in their own right but because nature, and the soul in our nature, need them, having engaged in tiresome activity. Nevertheless, this kind of rest (*ruste*) and inactivity (*ledicheyt*), and the pleasure we draw from it, is less perfect and less pleasurable than the rest we enjoyed amidst our initial activity, when our powers were still fresh and not yet worn out. For the soul never enjoys as much rest or pleasure in inactivity (*in niet werckene*) as she enjoys in activity (*in werckene*), and in the former case she will be more unrestful (*met meere onleden*) than when she engages in pleasurable, restful activity (*rustelijc werck*). Nevertheless, all the rest (*rusten*) that the soul enjoys, and the pleasure she derives from non-activity (*in niet wercken*), can only be obtained through being active (*overmits een werck*). For to delight in something or to take pleasure in it, is an activity of the desirous power.

The same applies to the inner faculties of the soul. For the higher faculties, in which all bliss and sanctity mainly reside if they are well-disposed (*ghedisponeert*) and have God as their object of enjoyment in this life and in the eternal life, are most restful in the midst of the activity in which they engage. The soul will never find as much rest or enjoyment in the complete non-activity of her faculties as in their complete activity. If the soul is properly disposed, she will

85 *De oris osculo*, n° 222.

enjoy in this activity more stillness (*ledichlijcker*) and less unrest (*min onleden*) than if she were to refrain from this activity. The fact that she at times in this life refrains from this activity is due to the weakness of her mortal nature or to her imperfection.

> You will thus understand that true, unhindered rest (*ghewareghe ledeghe reste*) does not consist in non-activity (*niet-werckene*) but in the perfect active existence of the soul.[86]

I consider this to be one of the most sophisticated descriptions of contemplation in the medieval period. Jordaens (and Ruusbroec before him) rejects the pursuit of pure stillness and quietude, a kind of meditative technique in which we sit in stillness and allow the faculties to become empty and vacant. Ruusbroec describes these practices in some detail throughout his works, and he too disapproves of them.[87] Instead, they argue for an integration of activity and rest, in which attentive receptivity (*ontfanclijcheyt*)[88] towards God is essential—not unlike Simone Weil's notion of attention.[89]

Let us now examine how Jordaens argues for this integration of activity and rest in theological terms.

Theological Justification

Jordaens refers to a key element from Ruusbroec's anthropology, namely, the distinction between the essential and active unity, which we have already discussed.[90] It must be said that Jordaens' outline of the 'essential unity' is rather short. He merely mentions that the soul is 'a spiritual substance' which cannot be annihilated by God. The exemplarist emphasis and the notion that the essence of the soul is deeply relational ('hanging in God' as Ruusbroec had it) remain fairly underdeveloped.[91] The second dimension of the soul is 'an active being (*een werckelijck sijn*), and this consists in the perfect activity (*volmaecten werckenne*) of her perfect powers.' This corresponds to Ruusbroec's second unity, the active unity. It is here, according to Jordaens, that the image of the

86 *De oris osculo*, nº 223–225.

87 See *Temptations* 196–206. For other places and a discussion of them, see Van Nieuwenhove (2003), pp. 70–74, 111–115.

88 See *De oris osculo*, nº 237f.

89 See her essay 'Réflexions sur le bon usage des études scolaires en vue de l'Amour de Dieu' in Weil (1966).

90 *De oris osculo*, nº 219–220.

91 *De oris osculo*, nº 219. Compare Ruusbroec's *Espousals* b1629–b1634.

Holy Trinity is found. Following Ruusbroec he claims that it is according to this aspect that the soul can become blessed or lost.[92]

Significantly, immediately after he has sketched the essential and active being of the soul, Jordaens moves to outline the activity and restful aspects of God's nature. While he adopts the contrast between essence and active nature (which is a key theme throughout Ruusbroec's writings) and while he alludes to the activity of the Trinity in terms of the generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit, he does not adopt the notion of *regiratio*, as Ruusbroec had done. Consider the following passage:

> The divine essence consists of these two modes of being in his one-fold divine being. For it pertains to his essence or being, to be active. If the essence or being of God were merely an essence as essence, without anything else, then the divine essence would not be blessed. Essence as essence does not know or love, and yet it is in those activities that all bliss is to be found. But essence as intellective, active nature knows itself perfectly, and that is the Father. Essence as spoken object of the intellective nature is the Word or the Son. Essence as spirated love from the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. Because these three pertain to God, God enjoys bliss. God does not know or love himself outside of himself and this may somewhat make clear that, if God is to be blissful, he must be threeness and oneness. For this reason we can say that those who claim that the most noble life on earth or the most blissful life in the heavenly realm is to be found in an empty [or unhindered] rest (*eenre ledegher rusten*) without activity or beyond activity, are in grave error.[93]

Jordaens then shows how to understand properly the ideal of activity and rest in the passage we have already discussed. What matters to us is that he argues for this integration of activity and rest by drawing on Ruusbroec's bipolar distinction between the active dimension and the essential dimension of both the divine and the human unities. Ruusbroec had done so in a number of places, when combating the adherents of a false emptiness or rest.[94] But Ruusbroec had also, as indicated already, made clear that the activity of the divine Persons does not simply refer to the generation of the Son and the

92 *De oris osculo*, n° 220.

93 *De oris osculo*, n° 221–222.

94 For instance, in *Beguines* E2b:36–39, Ruusbroec writes: 'the lofty essence of the threeness of God is eternally empty, without activity, and immoveable, according to essential being. But the nature of the Persons is fruitful, eternally active as to the mode of the Persons.' It is this contrast between essence (*wesen*) and active nature that his successors will adopt.

procession of Holy Spirit but also to their return; and in doing so, he could argue that the whole Christian life (the common life) can be understood in terms of going out (active life), going in (interior or God-yearning life), and fruition or rest (contemplative life). As Jordaens does not retain this dimension of Ruusbroec's teaching, his understanding of activity in rest, although highly illuminating in its own right, does not retain the full Trinitarian richness of Ruusbroec's teaching on the common life. In other words, Jordaens has retained the phenomenological description of the effects of divine grace upon the soul and its faculties, but he no longer understands the height of the mystical union (the kiss of mouth, in which activity and contemplation are in harmony with one another) in Trinitarian terms. As we will see, Herp will pay even more attention to the 'phenomenological' descriptions than Jordaens and he will abandon the ideal of activity in rest altogether.

In conclusion, Jordaens retains the notion of the common life (or at least, he mentions it once in the earlier part of his treatise) and he has given an exquisite description of the ideal of contemplation (or rest) in activity. Jordaens argues for his ideal of contemplation in action by adopting the distinction Ruusbroec made between active nature and pure essence in the divinity, coupled with Ruusbroec's anthropology, in which a similar distinction (between the active and essential nature) is central. Jordaens does not, however, retain the idea of *regiratio* of the Holy Spirit, and therefore his understanding of action in contemplation trades on the dialectic of divine essence/divine nature—rather than on a full-blown Trinitarian dynamics (in terms of generation and procession, *reditus* and fruition of the divine Persons). Having said this, Jordaens' description of the deified soul (and the active-contemplative disposition it has acquired) must rank as one of the most powerful ones in late medieval mystical literature.

Hendrik Herp and *The Mirror of Perfection*

Hendrik Herp (Harphius), probably born in Northern Brabant, was first attached to the Brethren of the Common Life in Holland before he became a Franciscan. He died in Mechelen in 1477. His most important work—the only one he wrote in Dutch—is his *Mirror of Perfection* (*Spieghel der volcomenheit*), written sometime in the 1440s and printed in 1475 and again in 1501. Publications in Latin (1509), French (1549 and 1605), Italian (1522), Portuguese (1533), and Spanish (1551) followed during the 16th century.[95] Herp's writings

95 All translations from *Spieghel* are mine. For an English translation of the fourth part of Herp's *Spieghel*, see Van Nieuwenhove, Faesen & Rolfson (2008), pp. 144–164.

exerted a very considerable influence, including on the French and Spanish schools of spirituality. Francisco de Osuna, Alonso de Madrid, and Bernardino de Laredo, amongst others, incorporated Herp's ideas into their work.[96] In 1538, all major works of Herp were published in Latin with the title *Theologia mystica*. The work proved extremely influential and went through a number of reprints (1545, 1556). In 1586, a 'corrected' version appeared in Rome. This corrected edition qualifies Herp's claims about the possibility of the vision of God in this life—exactly the concern that Gerson had raised about Ruusbroec's third book of *The Spiritual Espousals* (*Die Geestelike Brulocht*)—and replaces the Ruusbroecian language of the 'superessential' (*superessentialis*) life with 'supra-eminent' (*supereminens*) life.

Herp is often hailed as the herald of Ruusbroec, and no other author has influenced Herp as profoundly as Ruusbroec, not even his fellow Franciscan St Bonaventure. In my view, however, Herp failed to do full justice to a quintessential aspect of Ruusbroec's mystical theology: he does not adopt Ruusbroec's notion of *regiratio* of the Holy Spirit and how it grounds his ideal of the common life—which is probably why later French and Spanish authors do not adopt this important aspect of Ruusbroec's doctrine either.

The Mirror of Perfection is divided into four parts. The first part is introductory; it deals with the detachment (*afsceiden*) and the mortifications that are necessary for embarking on spiritual transformation. The goal of these mortifications is to rid ourselves of everything that might prove a hindrance to our union with God.[97] The rest of the book discusses how we can attain a lasting loving union without intermediary between God and the powers of the soul.[98] The second, third, and fourth parts treat the active, the contemplative, and the superessential lives respectively. The goal of the active life is the attainment of virtue through moral discipline, aided by grace (*gratia operans*).[99] For Ruusbroec, the active life refers both to ascetic practices and self-abnegation as well as charitable activity. It seems to me that Herp relegates the first aspect to the introductory first part, and the second aspect to the second

96 Gullik & de Veghel (1969).

97 *Spieghel*, Prol.: 'The first [principal element] is that we should die totally and become detached from all things, which may prove a hindrance in drawing near to God and be united to him.'

98 *Spieghel*, Prol. and II, 13.

99 *Spieghel* II, 19: 'the adornment of the active life is to be found in the moral virtues.'

part—the active life in the strict sense. It is unclear whether he is following Jordaens in this (with his division between gazing and conversing).[100]

The terminology obviously differs from Ruusbroec's. As we have seen, Ruusbroec distinguishes between an active, interior (or God-yearning), and contemplative life, to be harmoniously integrated into the 'common life.' Thus, while Ruusbroec has a clear tripartite division, Herp effectively has only the active and the contemplative life (in turn subdivided in its spiritual and its superessential dimension). In this context, *Spieghel* II, 15 is revealing. Following Jordaens' discussion of the two feet of our Lord (itself remotely inspired by St Bernard), Herp advises us that two things, namely, truth and mercy, are necessary to move from the active to the contemplative life. While the terminology suggests that, for Herp, there is therefore no intermediate stage between the active and the contemplative, we should perhaps not read too much into this. The contents of the third part (Herp's contemplative life) correspond roughly to Ruusbroec's inner life.

In *Spieghel* II, 20 Herp includes Ruusbroec's famous tripartite division of the soul, the so-called three unities. While Jordaens had not incorporated a description of the effects of grace on the third unity (Ruusbroec's advent of Christ in the essential unity), Herp will retain this dimension and will structure his work accordingly.

The Active Life

Herp then describes our transformation in the active life (*werkende leven*). Humility is a key virtue in the active life. He describes it as an inclination of the heart in the presence of divine majesty.[101] Through it we utterly grow in conformity to God's will and acquire meekness (*sachtmoedicheit*) and the patience to suffer all things. Proper intention (*meninghe*) is central to the attainment of the active life—a theme which was of particular relevance to Ruusbroec and Jordaens as well (although Ruusbroec discusses it mainly in the context of the interior life and Jordaens in the phase of mutual befriending of God and soul).[102]

Through a proper intention we are not concerned with ourselves, only with God, in the things we do, and thus we find God, be it in adversity or in good times. Nonetheless, this rectitude of intention is not perfect yet in the active life, and at this stage we often lose ourselves in distractions (cf. Pascal's *divertissements*). Herp concludes his discussion of the active life with a helpful

100 Herp had read Jordaens and uses his texts. See Moereels (1974a&b).

101 *Spieghel* II, 21.

102 *Spieghel* II, 23.

summary: 'When we have attained a right intention and an active, dynamic, love, and we can allow ourselves to rest in God beyond all things, adorned with moral virtues, then we have achieved a true active life.'[103] Even this brief summary of 'the active life,' as Herp sees it, will have made clear that it is more concerned with ascetical self-discipline and preparation of the soul than with an active life of virtue. In general, the ideal of harmonious integration of activity and rest—so important to Ruusbroec and Jordaens—will receive little attention in Herp's treatise.

The Spiritual-Contemplative Life

Part III treats of the spiritual contemplative life—roughly equivalent to Ruusbroec's inner life. This is the life of the hidden friends of God—a clear reference to Ruusbroec's discussion in *The Sparkling Stone*, where he associates the hidden friends with what he calls the inner life. Indeed, Herp describes how all exteriority (*wtwendicheit*) becomes a cross to those who enter this life. Herp's discussion of the spiritual contemplative life—the largest part of the book—meanders somewhat. In order to walk the path of contemplation we need two feet: the foot of intellect and the foot of loving desire. Both complement one another: without intellect, desire is blind; and intellect without desire is crippled and will fail to make progress.[104] Herp proposes a total transformation of desire and intellect. After his discussion of the transformation of desire (which culminates in III, 33 with a description of the union between the loving soul and God, drawing on all the classic metaphors to describe this transformation, namely, the drop of water that is mixed in wine, or the piece of iron that becomes enflamed, etc.), Herp turns to the other foot, the foot of the intellective power.

Here he describes for the first time the transformation of memory, intellect, and will. Herp points out that in the transformation of *memory* (*Spieghel* III, 35) we need to become free from all distractive images: 'he should always keep his memory free, unencumbered and empty from the imprint of images and thoughts, which are not useful and which do not lead to a loving inflowing in God [...] Instead, he will recollect the powers of his soul in God.'[105] Herp, like other mystical authors before him, is describing a *disposition* of radical theocentricity. It is a way of relating to the world and God. The same applies to Herp's description of the transformation of the *intellect*. How are we to envisage this transformation? Herp warns us that we should not indulge in curiosity, the vain pursuit of novelties and things irrelevant to our salvation and

103 *Spieghel* II, 26.

104 *Spieghel* III, 29.

105 *Spieghel* III, 35.

our journey towards God.[106] This illustrates his earlier point that intellect and desire must supplement one another. Our intellect, if it is to genuinely flourish, must be driven by love and desire for God. Finally, our will must conform to God's *will*: 'our will has to pour itself out into God's will, and not remain attached to itself.'[107]

In the contemplative life, the soul is adorned with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (fear, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, intellect, and wisdom)—a discussion Herp adopts from Ruusbroec's *Realm* and *Espousals* and which will not detain us.[108] Similarly, Herp incorporates major chunks of Ruusbroec's *Espousals* in his discussion of four grades of ascension.[109] They are: the river of God's grace which permeates the lower powers of the soul (40); the superabundance of spiritual wealth and spiritual drunkenness (41); attraction of the heart into a more intimate embrace of the love of God in the unity of the heart (44) with another discussion of *toegeesten*; and withdrawal of spiritual and sensible grace and devotion (47–49). In short, he describes the transformative effect of grace on the lower part of the soul, the first unity, *the unity of heart*, as Ruusbroec had done before him.

Herp returns to the transformation of the *higher faculties of the soul* (memory, intellect, and will) in *Spieghel* III, 51–53, which is of more immediate concern to us. He explicitly adopts Ruusbroec's tripartite understanding of the human person: the soul as the animating power; the spirit as the ground of the three faculties; and the superior part of the soul, in which the three faculties find their origin and in which they flow back. It is here that the image of the Holy Trinity has been imprinted. Thus, for Herp, following Ruusbroec, the human soul is a Trinitarian blueprint, mirroring the intra-Trinitarian dynamics and its flux and reflux:

> The most supreme part of the soul, in which the three faculties are united, and from which they flow as rays from the sun, and in which they flow back, is called mind (*ghedanck*, in Latin: *mens*). This is the central point of the soul, in which the image of the Trinity has been printed.[110]

Herp then goes on to describe the 'ascension' of memory, intellect, and will (chs 51–53). Again drawing on Ruusbroec, he compares the influx of grace to a

106 *Spieghel* III, 36.
107 *Spieghel* III, 36.
108 *Spieghel* III, 38.
109 *Spieghel* III, 40–47.
110 *Spieghel*, ch. 50.

fountain from which three rivers (symbolizing the three faculties) flow.[111] The *memory* (*memorie*) becomes quiet and pure, free from wandering images and distractions, anchoring the memory in the unity of its spirit. Here the human person becomes utterly absorbed into God.[112] The fountain of grace also illuminates the *intellect* beyond its natural light. It allows it to penetrate deeper into the mysteries of the Trinity—an aspect Ruusbroec had developed in greater detail in his discussion.[113] Finally, Herp outlines the influx of grace upon the *will*, the loving faculty.[114] Here we cover, again, ground familiar to readers of mystics of the Low Countries (Hadewijch, Ruusbroec). Herp gives a detailed description of the encounter of divine and human love and how divine love burns and annihilates (*vernietet*) the soul, 'melting the soul down into God's spirit so as to become one spirit in the fire of love.'[115] The soul wants to devour God's infinity but ends up being devoured itself—a variation on the theme of epektasis. This love, with its intense heat, expels from us all inordinate desires, worries concerns, and practices.

Finally, Herp, like Ruusbroec (but unlike Jordaens) describes the transformative aspects of grace on the third unity, the superior aspect and empty being of the soul, i.e., 'the essential unity of the soul,' the fountain and the origin of the higher faculties of the soul. Herein is to be found our highest bliss: that through the likeness of virtues and by the light of grace or glory our spirit is led into the peace of our essential unity of the soul, where God generously pours himself in with all his rich gifts.[116] In this context, Herp describes the touch (*tuck*) or the drawing in (*treck*) by God in the inner heart of our spirit, with a reference to Sg. 5:4 (*et venter meus intremuit ad tactum eius*). This was a theme which was to have a profound impact on the spirituality of John of the Cross. Through this touch the higher faculties become recollected (*vergadert*; *colliguntur*) in the unity of the spirit. In a passage taken from Ruusbroec's *Rungs*, Herp writes: 'The spirit of God, through its exhalation (*toegeesten; aspiratio*) draws us outward to actively love and perform virtues; and it also draws our spirit in to love with fruition and rest in bliss.'[117]

While Herp adopts Ruusbroec's description of the transformative effects of divine grace upon the soul, he fails to provide the reader with Ruusbroec's

111 *Spieghel* III, 51.
112 *Spieghel* III, 51.
113 *Spieghel* III, 52.
114 *Spieghel* III, 53.
115 *Spieghel* III, 53.
116 *Spieghel* III, 54.
117 *Spieghel* III, 54. See *Rungs* 1120–1123.

theology of the Trinity (and more specifically the aspect of *regiratio*) necessary to interpret Ruusbroec's outline as a participation in the inner-Trinitarian dynamics. Herp does not incorporate this teaching of Ruusbroec and merely retains the description of the effects of the operation of grace on the soul, without any explicit reference to its Trinitarian foundation.

In only one passage (*Spieghel* III, 57) does Herp refer to the way God (as active in his nature and attracting through the unity or essence) patterns our transformation. It is worth quoting him at length. The reader familiar with Ruusbroec will detect echoes from *Realm* and *Espousals*. After he has reminded us that we have been made in the likeness of God, Herp continues:

> As God is both out-flowing and in-flowing (for he flows out in a natural way with Truth and Love, as the eternal Truth is born from the Father, and the eternal Love proceeds from the two of them), so too we should flow out beyond all practices with knowledge of the truth of all things which may lead us to God, and with a love which we will collect from creatures, as honey from flowers, to bring into the uncreated love. Similarly, God flows in a natural way in through his unity and essence (*wesen*). For the unity of the divine nature draws the three Persons into itself in a knot or bond of love, and the divine essence (*wesen*) enfolds and permeates the unity of nature with an enjoyable embrace in essential love. Thus, too, the knot or bond of love of our love, stirred by God's love, will draw in our faculties in the unity of our spirit [...].[118]

Like Jordaens before him, Herp retains the Ruusbroecian bipolar tension between essence and nature. But he does not develop the return of the divine Persons by appealing to the role of the Holy Spirit as the principle of *reditus*. And while the notion of *reditus* of the divine Persons (which is alluded to here) can be linked with the recollection of the three faculties, Herp fails to interpret the ultimate goal of the mystical transformation in light of the Trinitarian dynamics. As a matter of fact, Herp does not mention the ideal of the common life at all. He has only retained the 'phenomenological' description of how the faculties become recollected through the 'attraction' of the divine essence. The same applies to his treatment of the final stage of the mystical journey, to which I turn now.

118 *Spieghel* III, 57.

The Superessential Contemplative Life

Herp's discussion of this superessential life begins, oddly enough, with a free adaption of Rulman Merwin's *De Novem Rupibus*. What is odd is the fact that it deals with ways of renouncing one's will—a discussion which effectively belonged more properly in his outline of the active life (Part II). After he has incorporated an extract from Ruusbroec's *Stone*,[119] Herp continues to describe how the Trinitarian Persons draw the faculties into their unity. This too is an odd repetition, and one wonders how this passage differs from the description of the transformation of the faculties in the previous part (the contemplative life, as discussed in Part III). Herp begins his discussion with the operation of the Holy Spirit on the will.[120] As a result of the operation of the Spirit, we no longer know or feel ourselves, God or any creature but we feel only love, which possesses us 'in a simple and naked blessedness.'[121] The Son, then, acts on the intellect. Through the Son's in-drawing activity we become a living mirror, in which God forms the spirit of truth.[122] The simple eye of our soul is drawn into 'immeasurable brightness, in which we see God and all things without distinction and consideration, with a simple contemplation in the divine brightness.'[123] Finally, Herp outlines how the Father acts on the memory. The Father bestows 'an incomprehensible, bright intellective light to descend into the most interior part of the naked elevated mind.'[124] This, Herp observes, is true contemplation, namely, to see God in a simple and onefold manner.

It is difficult to see how this constitutes the highest part of the spiritual journey. As indicated, it seems to be a repetition of the previous phase, i.e., the operation of the divine Persons on the three faculties in the spiritual-contemplative life (described earlier in Chapters 51–53). Leaving this aside, it is clear that Herp has failed to incorporate the common life as the apex of the mystical journey. What we are left with is, effectively, 'phenomenological' descriptions of the transformative effects of grace on the faculties. Ruusbroec has these descriptions as well (especially in the second book of the *Espousals*), but for

119 *Stone* 903–935.

120 Herp's word for the operations of the Holy Spirit is *inwerken* (lit: 'in-workings'), which translators put in Latin as *inactiones*. French writers will adopt this terminology literally, and talk of the 'in-action' of God on the soul, which, in French, is curiously misleading to denote the operation of God on the soul.

121 *Spieghel* III, 63.

122 *Spieghel* III, 64.

123 *Spieghel* III, 64.

124 *Spieghel* III, 65.

him they are not the climax of the mystical journey. For Herp they are. This is a crucial difference.

Thus, while Ruusbroec's mystical theology finds its fulfillment in the common life—a term which, as I had occasion to mention, Herp does not adopt—in which charitable activity and contemplation are in perfect harmony with one another, Herp's ideal is that of the superessential life, which in Ruusbroec's vision is only one facet of the common life. This will allow Herp to describe mystical union more as a transient experience than as the supreme ideal of the Christian life.[125] It is also noteworthy that Herp does not incorporate a critique of quietist practices as Ruusbroec and Jordaens had done. This is not surprising, given the fact that he has abandoned the ideal of the common life, the harmonious synthesis of action and contemplation.

Again, the Trinitarian dimension is not as explicit in Herp's *Spieghel*. Herp uses the Trinitarian dynamic to explain the dynamic of God's gracing activity on the soul (especially when he discusses the divine touch), but he fails to adopt the notion that the whole life of the Christian can be seen as a participation in the life of the Trinity, in its active, in-going or God-yearning, and contemplative or fruitive aspects. The reason why he may have missed it is that he drew mainly on the third part of Ruusbroec's *Espousals* in the latter stages of his own *Spieghel*. Ruusbroec's best descriptions of the common life are, however, to be found elsewhere (such as in *Realm, Rungs*, the second book of *Espousals*, and *Stone*).

Furthermore, Herp eliminates the strong exemplarist elements from his thought. The theology of the Image, so beautifully developed by Ruusbroec in his own *Mirror of Eternal Blessedness* and elsewhere, is pretty much absent from Herp's *Spieghel*. As a matter of fact, there are only a handful of quotations from Ruusbroec's *Mirror*; most of Herp's quotations are derived from *Espousals*. Now, in the *Espousals* Ruusbroec does include an excursus on exemplarism; and he does mention the common life in the second book. But unless the reader has fully absorbed key passages from *Stone* (such as the one we discussed), *Realm*, and *Rungs* and is attentive to how Ruusbroec consistently adopts the *same* vocabulary of going-out, going-in, and fruition or rest in his descriptions of the common life as he uses in this outline of the intra-divine dynamics, he might miss Ruusbroec's key point when only reading the *Espousals*. And the key point is, as I have mentioned a number of times, that the common life itself

125 The more affective character of Herp's spirituality can also be illustrated by the role he attributes to prayerful ejaculations (see *Spieghel*, ch. 32: *toegeesten*; Lat. *aspirationes et eiaculationes*), an aspect which may have inspired Francis de Sales. See Cognet (1966), p. 306.

is a participation in the intra-Trinitarian dynamics. In other words, it is not just the process of transformation that has a Trinitarian dimension; the end result of this transformation—the common life—is deeply shaped by the dynamic and fruition of the Trinity. Ruusbroec's successors adopted the first aspect (the 'phenomenological' one) but missed the second one. Jordaens did retain the ideal of activity in fruition but did not develop it in the same way as Ruusbroec had done. While retaining the dialectic of divine essence and active nature, he does not retain the notion of *regiratio* through the Holy Spirit. Herp retains the same dynamic, in one place, but the Trinitarian aspect is even thinner. He abandons Ruusbroec's exemplarist anthropology and replaces Ruusbroec's common life with a superessentialist life, described in phenomenological terms. As a consequence, his spirituality overall becomes more psychological and affective.

In saying this I do not mean to evaluate the (de)merits of Jordaens' or Herp's oeuvre using Ruusbroec's writings as a yardstick. But I do aim to show that Ruusbroec's Trinitarian vision is not fully retained in Jordaens and Herp. Insofar as especially Herp transmitted the mystical-theological tradition of the Low Countries to the Spanish mystics (John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila), his abandoning of the theme of the common life and its Trinitarian foundation was to have important historical consequences.

Ruusbroec in Latin: Impulses and Impediments

Kees Schepers

In today's world, the English language provides almost the sole linguistic entrance to global academic discourse; in the Middle Ages, the dominance of Latin was even greater. Latin therefore was the only language by which the works of John of Ruusbroec could penetrate and influence contemporary thinking on mystical theology and on the experiential aspects of mysticism. This inevitability of Latin was first brought home to the Canons Regular of Groenendaal through the request of the Cistercians from the Flemish abbey of Ter Doest for a Latin translation of Ruusbroec's *The Spiritual Espousals*. The Cistercians claimed they could only perceive a faint hint of the full flavor of Ruusbroec's vernacular text, and asked for a text in a more accessible language. Only then would they be able to take full benefit of the text. The Ter Doest monks' request was the first impulse for a Latin translation of one of Ruusbroec's works.

The necessity to have Ruusbroec in Latin was understood by contemporaries of Ruusbroec such as his confrere Willem Jordaens and the famed Geert Grote. They each produced Latin translations of key works by Ruusbroec and inserted them into 14th-century Latin discourse. Stylistically, their translations are diametrically opposed, and they followed divergent dissemination patterns. Grote's translations seem to have found their way mostly in the German cultural sphere and some additional centers under *Devotio moderna* influence outside it; Jordaens' translations were more appreciated in the Romance cultural sphere. The result of their efforts was the dissemination of Ruusbroec's work from Great Britain to Poland and from Italy to Austria. Ruusbroec's works thus could exert their influence on European mysticism through several phases and modes of reception.

It seems safe to say that for every translation there is a reason—an objective the translation is meant to achieve. Similarly, whenever the dissemination of a text comes to a halt, an explanation can be found. These plain realities are the basis for this presentation of the Latin translations of Ruusbroec's work. Many diverse impulses for the introduction of his works into Latin can be noted covering a period that stretches from Ruusbroec's lifetime until the early modern era. Impulses led to translations, the full effect of which was often hindered by some subsequent impediment standing in the way of a wider dissemination. After the effect of a translation had worn out or was brusquely halted, there would follow another impetus for translations and for dissemination

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_010

initiatives. In following the sequence of impulses and impediments for the Latin Ruusbroec translations, we may better understand the rationale behind their capricious trajectory through the Latin world.

Impulse: The Cistercians of Ter Doest Abbey

The chain of events regarding Ruusbroec in Latin starts with the request of the Ter Doest Cistercians. Jordaens' Latin rendering of the *Espousals* subsequently became the starting point for a whole range of translation initiatives and evaluations of Ruusbroec's works.

The Cistercian abbey of Ter Doest is located near Bruges in present-day West-Flanders.[1] We are only indirectly informed about the monks' request to Groenendaal, as it is reflected—and possibly distorted—in the response formulated in the dedicatory letter that precedes Jordaens' translation. The heading explicitly states: 'letter to the brothers of the Abbey of Ter Doest in Flanders on the translation of the following book.'[2] The Cistercians allegedly asked for a translation because the difference between the Brabantine Middle Dutch and the West-Flanders dialect obstructed a full understanding of the *Brulocht*.

> You have requested, dearest brothers, in a humble and devout letter, to have translated for you into Latin our little book *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum*, that we published some time ago in Brabantine Germanic, of which however, as you wrote, because of the difference between the North-Flanders and Brabantine idioms you can grasp very little of the full taste, though because of the closeness of dialects you can receive from it some subtle smell of such sweetness, that you have no doubt that not just all sanctity, but even the perfection of all sanctity, the consummation

1 De Ganck & Huyghebaert (1966).

2 'Epistola ad fratres de capella Thosan in Flandria super interpretatione libri sequentis.' In Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 203–204. The address of the letter caused great confusion with the scribes of textual witnesses written in places far away from Flanders or Groenendaal. For example: *Ioannis Rusberi Presbyteri, ad fratres de Capella Rosana in Flandria*; *Epistola dompni Johannis primi prioris uallis uiridis ad fratres Cartusienses de capella rosan in Flandria*. Understandably, the scribes of the Italian manuscripts are most confused about the name of the abbey. The dedicatory letter is also edited and commented upon in Combes (1945a), pp. 591–594; for a discussion of the authorship, see ibid., pp. 135–233; the letter is also extensively discussesed in Ampe (1975a), pp. 1–45.

> of all perfection and the purpose of all consummation is demonstrated in it.[3]

The remark on the near incomprehensibility of the Brabantine dialect seems to be a less than truthful assertion. Even though, admittedly, there is a difference between Middle Dutch in Flanders and in Brabant, the real reason for the Cistercians was probably more of a socio-cultural nature. The alleged language problem probably disguised a disdain for the vernacular.[4] It might well be that some monks in Ter Doest did not originate from the Low Countries and therefore had no thorough understanding of the vernacular, but this was not presented as the reason for the request.

Jordaens wrote the prologue in the first person plural, from the perspective of Ruusbroec: *in persona ipsius*.[5] Still, he did not intend to suggest that Ruusbroec translated the text himself. The closing phrase of the letter, surviving in most manuscripts, is quite enlightening: *Explicit prefatio interpretis libri sequentis* ('Here ends the preface of the translator of the following book'). The word *interpres* makes clear to the well educated—and the intended audience must be considered as such—that this *interpres* is someone other than the author. This *interpres* wrote the dedicatory letter and translated the following work.[6]

---

3 *Flagitastis, fratres karissimi, litteris humilibus et devotis interpretari vobis latino eloquio libellum nostrum De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum, a nobis olim editum theutonico brabantino, cuius quidem, ut scripsistis, quamquam ob aquilonaris Flandrie Brabantieque ydiomatum dissonantiam plenum gustum minime capiatis, propter nonnullam tamen loquele vicinitatem tenuem quendam odorem tante suavitatis ex ipso percipitis, ut in eo non modo omnem sanctitatem, verumetiam omnis sanctitatis perfectionem, omnis perfectionis consummationem et omnis consummationis finem demonstrari nullatenus dubitetis*. See Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), p. 203, Ep3–12. A translation of the whole letter in Schepers (2010).

4 Ampe (1975a), pp. 23–26. Somewhat analogous, though from a much later date, is the reason the Cologne Carthusian Blommevenna gave around 1490 for having the *Spieghel der volcomenheit* by Hendrik Herp translated into Latin: 'The literate read the vernacular with weariness and normally despise listening to it' (*literati . . . cum taedio vulgare perlegant et audire communiter contemnant*). See Verschueren (1929), p. 11.

5 Cf. the use of this term in the defense by Jan van Schoonhoven in his *Epistola responsalis*, ed. Combes (1945a), p. 728.

6 Among contemporaries, only Gerson seems to have been duped by the *Epistola*. Overlooking the concluding sentence, he assumed that Ruusbroec had made the translation himself (see p. 264).

There are other instances where Jordaens relies on the knowledge of literary conventions among the Cistercians, implicitly flattering them over their level of erudition. Tacitly referring to Jerome and Quintilian, Jordaens describes his manner of translating as *sensus de sensu*.[7] He shrouds the content of the text in a new linguistic attire, while respecting the idiosyncrasies of the target language, in this case Latin. As a consequence, Jordaens says, those less versed in both languages might be tempted to think that this is not a very successful translation. 'But you,' Jordaens flatters 'will certainly not be troubled by the formal dissonances in linguistic attire,' thus implying that the Cistercians are readers of a much higher level.[8] The apology demonstrates both self-confidence and a conscious translation strategy on the part of the anonymous translator.

The huge difference between the type of language in the Middle Dutch *Brulocht* and in Jordaens' translation has been misunderstood and misused. Some have considered Jordaens' translation a failure, while others, first and foremost Pomerius, took the opportunity to put the blame for the controversy with Gerson squarely onto Jordaens.[9] This led to an entirely false perception of the cause of the conflict, and wrongly tarnished Jordaens' reputation.

Numerous hypotheses have been put forward regarding the date of Jordaens' translation. Notwithstanding some consensus on dating the work—largely between 1355 and 1360—each hypothesis lacks supporting evidence.[10]

All of Jordaens' Ruusbroec translations were certainly made between the time of Jordaens' entrance into Groenendaal *c.*1353 and his death in 1372.[11] On the basis of circumstantial evidence, we can tentatively determine a *terminus ante quem* and conclude that *De ornatu* was probably produced some time between *c.*1353 and 1365.[12]

---

7 Ampe (1975a), pp. 32–37. Jerome, *Epistola LVII* (1910), pp. 503–526. Jerome's translation principle even allows for omissions, additions, and minor changes.

8 *Et ob hoc forsitan peregrino uestitus habitu aut mutatus aut minus amabilis ab utriusque lingue sciolis habebitur, cum tamen secundum beatum Iheronimum optimus interpretandi / modus sit ubi interpretantis lingue, ceu fieri ualet, proprietas obseruatur. Vos uero, fratres, habituum dissonantia non consternat, dummodo uobis eadem sensus resonet armonia* . . . ; Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), p. 204, Ep 28/34.

9 See p. 260.

10 For references to all hypotheses, see Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), p. 19, n. 26.

11 Dykmans (1940), pp. 306–307.

12 The argument for this date can be found in Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 19–22.

Dissemination of *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum*

A copy of *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum* must have been sent to Ter Doest. It was arguably the most important of the early Ruusbroec translations, because it originated from the Groenendaal community itself. The ensuing dissemination of *De ornatu* follows a clear and coherent pattern, and it took place within a relatively short time span.

Brabant, Flanders, Northern France

Two or three of the most important manuscripts of *De ornatu* have been lost: first, the manuscript that was commissioned by the Cistercians of Ter Doest;[13] second, the copy that was part of the Groenendaal Collection (see infra 246–247). The text of *De ornatu* in the Groenendaal Collection must have been copied from an earlier exemplar, and therefore three of the most important manuscripts are lost.

Four of the earliest and text-critically best manuscripts survive from the geographical and cultural environment of Groenendaal. They originate from: the Premonstratensian abbey Park in Heverlee near Leuven,[14] some 25 kilometers northeast of Groenendaal; the Charterhouse Notre Dame de la Chapelle near Hérinnes-lez-Enghien (Herne),[15] some 50 kilometers to the west of Groenendaal; and from the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Rictrude and Saint-Pierre in Marchiennes,[16] 50 kilometers southwest of Groenendaal. The fourth manuscript originates from an unknown place in the same region and belonged to someone in the spiritual entourage of Pierre d'Ailly.[17]

The late 14th-century manuscript from Park is of exceptional textual quality. The special care given to *De ornatu* was likely based on the esteem for the works of Ruusbroec in Park, an esteem that can also be deduced from the fact that an anonymous monk from Park translated two of Ruusbroec's works into Latin.[18] The codex from Park is the only *De ornatu* manuscript of Premonstratensian origin.

---

13 There is no trace of *De ornatu* in the catalogue of the Duinenabdij in Bruges. The manuscript collection of Ter Doest was absorbed into the collection of the Duinenabdij in 1624. In 1628, Carolus de Visch made a catalogue of the combined collection: [Carolus de Visch], *Index librorum MSS Bibliothecae Monasterii Dunensis ordinis cisterciensis in Flandria*. This catalogue was published in Sanderus (1641), pp. 150–207.

14 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 4935–43.

15 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 11489–91.

16 Douai, Bibliothèque Municipale, 454.

17 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 1041.

18 See p. 247, and n. 41.

The manuscript from the Charterhouse in Herne bears witness to intense interest both for Ruusbroec's works and for the Ruusbroec-Gerson controversy. It also includes further translations by Jordaens. Furthermore, it contains a gloss concerning the *Boecsken der verclaringhe*, the work that Ruusbroec wrote in response to doctrinal concerns voiced from Herne. Both the *Boecsken* and the gloss deal with one of the most contentious concepts in Ruusbroec's work: the unity without difference (*enecheit sonder differencie*). The manuscript also contains the *Epistola prima* of Gerson, the apologetic *Epistola responsalis* by Jan van Schoonhoven, and the related but anonymous *Epistola de caritate*.[19]

Herne played a major role both in the reception and dissemination of Ruusbroec's writings. It was probably a Herne Carthusian who brought Gerson into contact with *De ornatu*.[20] Gerson's subsequent censure of Ruusbroec's teaching dealt a serious blow to the dissemination of *De ornatu*. Thus Herne is partly responsible for both the good fame and the ill fate of Ruusbroec's work.

The third *De ornatu* manuscript originating from the geographical environment of Groenendaal is the manuscript from Douai, probably written in 1399. It was donated to the Benedictine abbey Saint-Rictrude and Saint-Pierre in Marchiennes, close to Douai, by Guillaume Chrétien, who was abbot of the abbey from 1389 until his death in 1412. Earlier, Guillaume had been monk in the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Martin in Tournai (Doornik). One may assume that he had discovered *De ornatu* while still in Tournai. The introduction of *De ornatu* to Douai may have functioned as the point of departure for the subsequent crossing of Ruusbroec's *opus magnum* into England.

The fourth *De ornatu* manuscript, containing numerous other texts, cannot be located exactly, but on the basis of its content one may assume that it originated from the spiritual and geographical milieu of Groenendaal. Dating from the early 15th century, it contains, apart from *De ornatu*, texts by Pierre d'Ailly, who was appointed bishop of Cambrai in 1397 (the diocese under whose authority Groenendaal fell), and by Jean Gerson, who formulated his censure of *De ornatu* just before the manuscript was written. The collection of excerpts in this codex was probably copied from an earlier collection, likely to have been personally assembled by Pierre d'Ailly.

19 See p. 265.

20 See p. 262.

England

Guillaume Chrétien was familiar with *De ornatu* when he moved from Tournai to Marchiennes near Douai. The hypothesis that *De ornatu* crossed the Channel into England from Douai is supported by textual evidence. The *De ornatu* version in the Marchiennes manuscript is closely related to the version in the one surviving copy in England, from the Benedictine Abbey of Worcester.[21]

Hitherto the role of Carthusians in the dissemination of Ruusbroec to and in England has been strongly stressed.[22] Their role may be overestimated, however. It has even been suggested that the Carthusians were entirely responsible for the propagation of Ruusbroec's works in England.[23] This view was partly developed on the basis of incorrect assumptions. The *De ornatu* manuscript kept in Utrecht was tentatively attributed to a Carthusian scriptorium in the Northern Netherlands, while in fact codicological analysis has shown that it was written in Italy, most probably in a Benedictine abbey.[24]

Relations between English and continental (Flemish) Carthusians were certainly strong, but in the dissemination of *De ornatu* they seem to have had a minor role. Nonetheless, *De calculo*, the translation of *The Sparkling Stone*, appears to have circulated among English Carthusians, as did the treatises *The Chastising of God's Children*, consisting of translated excerpts from the Geert Grote translation of *Die geestelike brulocht*, and *The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, a close rendering of Willem Jordaens' translation of *The Sparkling Stone*, both known from Carthusian sources.[25] Ruusbroec even came to be known as *prior domus vallis viridis iuxta Bruxellam ordinis Carthusiensis*.[26]

---

21 Worcester Cathedral and Chapter Library, F 80.

22 Ampe (1957c) and (1975a), pp. 362–366; Emery (1979).

23 The claim is made in Colledge (1952), p. 49: 'with respect to all Ruysbroek's writings, the English Charterhouses served in the fifteenth century as the means for their introduction and circulation in England'; Colledge (1979), pp. 158–159: 'To take only two, but outstanding examples, we now know with certainty that had it not been for them (i.e., the Carthusians), John Ruysbroek's *Espousals* and his *Treatise of Perfection*, and Walter Hilton's *Scale* would not have become known overseas in the way which has been shown.'

24 Sargent (1976), p. 236, about the Utrecht MS: 'probably made in a Charterhouse in the Netherlands'; cf. Schepers (2001), p. 250: 'All previous conjectures on the role of Dutch Carthusians in the dissemination of the two translations, based on (unsubstantiated) assumptions concerning the provenance of the Utrecht MS, lose their main support, and therefore need revision.'

25 *Chastising* (1957).

26 A notice in Cambridge, Trinity College, 1401, in a tract called *Confirmacio ordinis Carthusiensis*. The text of the entire notice can be found in Ampe (1975a), pp. 362–363.

It is quite possible that this appropriation of Ruusbroec by the Carthusians can simply be explained by a mistaken identification of *viridis vallis* (Groenendaal) with *vallis viridis* (the Charterhouse Vauvert near Paris).

Paris

Paris constituted an unexpected *cul-de-sac* for the 15th-century dissemination of *De ornatu*. Just one manuscript of *De ornatu* is still extant in Paris: Mazarine, 921. A re-evaluation of its provenance allows for the assumption that this manuscript was actually written in Paris and had been copied from another Parisian manuscript, from the Vauvert Charterhouse.[27] Relations between Herne and Vauvert were rather strong, which probably accounts for the fact that the version in Mazarine 921 is remarkably close to the version in the Herne manuscript.

Herne also played an important role in the development of the Ruusbroec-Gerson controversy. Gerson probably became acquainted with *De ornatu* through the involvement of the Herne Carthusian Bartholomaeus.[28]

Italy

The Italian tradition of *De ornatu* is exceptionally rich, with five of the 12 surviving manuscripts being found in Italy. How did such a relatively high number of manuscripts come to exist across the Alps? First, the occurrence of the text seems to be connected with Benedictine interest. The text is attested with certainty in two Benedictine monasteries, and there is ample evidence to suggest that the other Italian manuscripts also originate from Benedictine monasteries.[29]

The occurrence of *De ornatu i*s presumably both a consequence and a sign of a revival of authentic monastic culture in some of the Benedictine monasteries. The years 1364 (Subiaco) and 1367 (Monte Cassino) mark the return to discipline that had been lost for over a century.[30] In Subiaco, the draconian measure had been taken to accept foreign monks almost exclusively, especially *teutonici*, i.e., Germans, Flemish, and Dutch. This probably explains not only the early occurrence of *De ornatu* in Italy but also its dissemination. Given the

27 Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 130–134.

28 See p. 263.

29 Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 1058 (2073); Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 5 F 34 (15348). See Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), p. 58.

30 Schmitz (1948), p. 84; about Italian Benedictine monasteries in general, pp. 80–91.

origin of the Subiaco monks, it is not surprising to find that a manuscript from Subiaco is one of the best Italian textual witnesses of *De ornatu*.[31]

The monasteries of Subiaco, Monte Cassino, and Mondragone were exemplary in their strict adherence to the Rule of Benedict. At the council of Constance (1414–1418), it was decided that this strict life was to be reintroduced in other regions as well. One of the admirable Italian-German monks was Nikolaus Seyringer (*c.*1360 Matzen, Niederösterreich—1425 Vienna).[32] Seyringer von Matzen had gone to Subiaco in 1403 with some friends. Perhaps after a frustrated attempt to become abbot in Subiaco, he moved with his friends to Rocca di Mondragone in 1413, where he became prior.

***Poland* (*East Prussia*)**

One *De ornatu* manuscript originates from as far as Elbing in East Prussia (now Elblag, Poland), though it was written elsewhere.[33] The version of *De ornatu* in this manuscript represents the transitional phase between the first Brabantine and North-French version of *De ornatu* and the Italian version. Although the provenance of the Cambridge manuscript is present-day Poland, the origin of its exemplar probably lies in the South-German region of Strasbourg and Basel.

How did an East-Prussian copy of a South-German manuscript come about? The copy of *De ornatu* in Southern Germany is probably connected to the *Gottesfreunde*, a loosely organized South-German religious group with a documented admiration for Ruusbroec.[34] Someone in or close to this group (possibly Johannes Tauler) may have been the recipient of the Ruusbroec letter found in this same Cambridge manuscript.[35] The *Gottesfreunde* must also have owned a copy of Jordaens' translation of Ruusbroec's *Vanden blinckenden steen*, which was copied into this manuscript as well. It is likely that *De ornatu* was extant in Southern Germany at an early date: a copy of the Middle Dutch *Brulocht* was sent to the *Gottesfreunde* as early as 1350, and given their vivid interest in Ruusbroec, a copy of the first Latin translation may have reached them early on.

31 Subiaco, Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale Santa Scolastica, 202 (198).

32 Löser (1999), p. 274; Kreuzer (1993).

33 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 526.

34 Mertens (1997).

35 Schepers (2001).

The East-Prussian manuscript from Cambridge was written as late as *c.*1431. The fact that the exemplar from Southern Germany ultimately generated a copy in East-Prussia is almost certainly related to the Council of Constance (1414–1418), where clerics and rulers from all over Europe gathered. Copies of *De ornatu*, *De calculo*, and the Ruusbroec letter must afterwards have travelled east with one of the participants.

Conclusion

On the basis of the surviving manuscripts, we may conclude that the reception of *De ornatu* was confined almost exclusively to Carthusians and Benedictines. The one Premonstratensian manuscript originates from Park Abbey, not far from Groenendaal.

In the case of *De ornatu*, it is revealing to note among what groups the text does *not* survive, and where it was possibly little read. First and foremost, there are no extant manuscripts from the order to which Groenendaal belonged: the regular canons. Only at a later date did the Abbey of Saint-Victor acquire a copy from the Carthusians.[36] Second, *De ornatu* is markedly absent in all branches of the *Devotio Moderna*, including the regular canons from the Windesheim congregation. Finally, Jordaens' translation is hardly present in the German cultural sphere: *De ornatu* was read and transmitted almost exclusively in the Romance cultural sphere.

The Impulse of Groenendaal Guardianship

Did the honorific request of Ter Doest Cistercians arouse further pride in the Groenendaal community over the exceptional significance of their brother John's mystical works? Possibly. In any case, precisely at about that time, the Groenendaal Canons began to assemble and cherish his oeuvre, even as it was still being expanded.

The Two-Volume Groenendaal Collection

There is early evidence that the Groenendaal community cherished the textual heritage of its most famed author and that it also closely monitored the dissemination of his works in Latin. Already during his lifetime, around 1365, Ruusbroec's then nine texts were assembled in one codex.[37] The codex would have become too voluminous when, at a later date, the two last treatises had to

36 MS Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 921.

37 Kienhorst & Kors (2001) and (2003).

be added: *The Little Book of Enlightenment* and *The Twelve Beguines*. The practical solution was to disassemble the codex and divide the now 11 treatises over two volumes. Thus the original 'Groenendaalse verzamelhandschrift' ('Groenendaal Codex') ceased to exist in its original form and was turned into a two-volume collection that one might label the 'extended Groenendaal Collection.'

At a later date—it is unknown when—a third volume was added, which contained four Latin translations by Willem Jordaens, though they were not all attributed to Jordaens.

Of these three volumes, only one is still extant. This codex, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 19295–97, is known under siglum A. It contains *The Spiritual Tabernacle, A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*, and *The Seven Rungs*. A 15th-century copy exists of the second volume, Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1165–67, known under siglum F. It contains Ruusbroec's eight other works.

Both codices, A and F, each contain a table of contents for their respective volume (see edition in Appendix Three). What is important with regard to the Ruusbroec translations is that both tables of contents not only inform us about the treatises in the respective volume but also tell us which of those texts were translated into Latin and by which translator.

The table in MS A is written by a hand from the late 14th or early 15th century, and with regard to the Latin translations it contains some very important pieces of information. It tells us that at that time, *The Spiritual Tabernacle* had been translated by Jordaens and *The Seven Rungs* by Geert Grote. The table mentions no translation of *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*. In a way, this is also important, since an extant translation of this text has been attributed to Geert Grote as well.[38] We therefore can only speculate why his translation of *The Seven Rungs* is mentioned, while that of the *Mirror* is not. Was the translation of the *Mirror* only completed after this list had been drawn up?[39] Is there a mix up of attributions, as this particular translation of *The Seven Rungs* is now generally attributed to Willem Jordaens?[40] We do not know.

It is assumed that the list in codex F is a copy of the same list in the lost volume (generally referred to with A*). Whether or not that is the case, the script in F dates from the early 15th century and the list thus reflects, at the very least, the knowledge about translations at that time. The list tells us of two other translations by Willem Jordaens, of *The Sparkling Stone* and

38 See p. 255.

39 Ampe (1975c), pp. 338–340.

40 See p. 251.

The Spiritual Espousals. We are also informed that there are two extant translations by an anonymous Premonstratensian from the abbey of Park, near Leuven. He translated *The Little Book of Enlightenment* and *The Four Temptations*.[41]

In sum, the combined booklists of A and F provide the following information on texts and translators. Some of this information is questionable, as we shall see.

1. *The Spiritual Tabernacle*	Willem Jordaens
2. *The Spiritual Espousals*	Willem Jordaens
3. *The Sparkling Stone*	Willem Jordaens
4. *The Little Book of Enlightenment*	Anonymous Premonstratensian
5. *The Four Temptations*	Anonymous Premonstratensian
6. *The Seven Rungs*	Geert Grote

Early Testimony Concerning the Three-Volume Groenendaal Collection

At some time the Groenendaal Collection came to consist of three volumes: two with the Middle Dutch works (A and A*), and one with Jordaens' translations. The volume with Latin translations, unfortunately, has been lost without a trace. There is, however, an early testimony concerning the three-volume collection when it was still complete. In 1622, the historian and bibliographer Aubert Miraeus (1573–1640) visited Groenendaal; he reported on the collection and also described the content of the third volume:[42]

In tertio tomo infra scripta habentur. Latine reddita.

1. De spirituali Tabernaculo, praefigurato per Tabernaculum foederis Domini, quod aedificavit Moyses in deserto, libri quinque, interprete *Guilielmo* [sic] *Iordani*, Canonico regulari in Viridi Valle, qui anno 1372 ibidem obijt. Praefatio Iordani est ad Gerardum Magnum Daventriensem: *Patris sanctissimi patrime sancte, frater Gerarde, praedicator veritatis egregie*.
2. De nuptijs spiritualibus libri tres, interprete eodem Iordano: cuius Praefatio seu Prologus, ipsius Rusbroquij nomine, dirigitur ad fratres Capellae Thosanae in Flandria, quae est abbatia ord. Cisterciensis, cum Episcopatu Brugensi nunc unita: *Flagitastis fratres carissimi litteris humil-*

41 Nothing more is known about these translations. A translation of the *The Four Temptations* in a Liège manuscript is attributed to the Premonstratensians by Deschamps. See Appendix 1 at the end of this chapter.

42 Miraeus (1622), pp. 38–39.

ibus et devotis, interpretari vobis Latino eloquio labellum nostrum De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum.

3. De septem gradibus scalae divini amoris, interprete Gerardo Magno Daventriensi, *Postulemus a Domino suam cum sancto timore gratiam*.
4. De Calculo, alio nomine, De perfectione filiorum Dei, interprete eodem Guilielmo Iordani: *Quicumque vult vivere in perfectissimo statu almae matris Ecclesiae*.[43]

Groenendaal Obituary

A third early testimony on the available Latin translations is found in the Groenendaal Obituary.[44] It was for the most part recorded by Sayman van Wijc (1374–1438) and contains valuable information on the works of Willem Jordaens: 'In the year of our Lord 1372, Willem Jordaens, priest, died. What an excellent clerk he was, is demonstrated by the books *The Tabernacle, The Espousals*, and *The Rungs* that he translated into Latin from Dutch.'[45] This information, however, conflicts on one essential point with the information in the Tables of Contents of the Groenendaal collection. Whereas the Groenendaal Collection ascribes the translation of *The Seven Rungs* to Geert Grote, the obituary attributes the translation to Willem Jordaens. Ampe has extensively tried to reconcile these conflicting sources.[46] I will not evaluate his complex argument but will merely point out that much of the incongruity between the lists could in recent years be explained with the help of additional textual witnesses and through the analysis of translation strategies used in certain translations.

---

43 Miraeus (1622), p. 39, also summarizes the information on other Latin translations found in the tables in manuscripts A and A*: *Liber De quattuor tentationibus, & liber Apologeticus, agens de unione amantis animae cum Deo sunt in linguam Latinam translati, a quodam Canonico regulari Parcensi ord. Premonstratensis, prope Lovanium: ut in primo folio primi voluminis notatur: sed eos hactenus reperire non potui*.

44 The obituary exists in two versions, an older, less complete and a younger, much more extensive version (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 557–59 and Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, II 155). See *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), n° 36 and 37.

45 Dykmans (1940), pp. 306–307: *A.D. M.ccc.lxxij, obiit frater Wilhelmus Iordani presbyter. Quam excellens clericus iste fuerit demonstrant libri De tabernaculo, De nupciis et De gradibus, quos ipse in latinum de theutonico transtulit*. The obituary goes on to list some of his achievements as a scribe: *Scripsit eciam plura, precipue unum integrum antiphonarium in duobus uoluminibus ante prepositum locatum; item unum integrum missale iacens super altare Apostolorum*.

46 See several sections in Ampe's discussion of the Latin translations, Ampe (1975a), pp. 297–350.

Willem Jordaens (†1372), Author and Translator

As we have seen from the entry on Jordaens in the Groenendaal Obituary, Jordaens' reputation within the community seems to have rested mainly on his translations of Ruusbroec's works. Later biographical records about Jordaens continue to present his work as a translator as primary.[47] Of Jordaens' original works, his lamentation over a beloved confrere and a rhymed treatise over the conflict between virtue and vice are mentioned most often.[48] Both works stand out because of the elaborate style that is also the hallmark of Jordaens' translation of the *Espousals*. There is also a list of Middle Dutch works that were attributed to Jordaens by modern scholarship, but every single item seems to be questionable.[49]

Jordaens' involvement with the translation of Ruusbroec's works most likely started with the commissioned *Espousals* translation. It did not end there, although the full extent of his translation enterprise is hard to determine. On the one hand, the Tables in manuscripts A and F (and the related list in Miraeus) tell us that he translated *The Spiritual Tabernacle, The Spiritual Espousals*, and *The Sparkling Stone*; the Groenendaal Obituary, on the other hand, lists as Jordaens' translations: *The Spiritual Tabernacle, The Spiritual Espousals*, and *The Seven Rungs*. Modern scholarship has come to agree that the Tables and the obituary are *both* right and *both* incomplete, as it is now generally accepted that Jordaens translated *The Spiritual Tabernacle, The Spiritual Espousals, The Sparkling Stone*, and *The Seven Rungs*.

Still, there is lingering and serious doubt over the one extant translation of *The Sparkling Stone* that is attributed to Jordaens.[50] Assuming that the omission in the obituary is a puzzling lapsus, and assuming that Jordaens did indeed translate *The Sparkling Stone*, we are confronted with the confusing fact that there is a striking stylistic difference between *De ornatu* and *De calculo*. Whereas *De ornatu* is characterized by an elaborate style that is the result of a translation strategy that follows the precepts of Jerome, the translation in *De calculo* strikes one as rather slavishly staying close to the original Middle Dutch. This would imply either that Jordaens was able to write in two entirely different styles or that the surviving translation was produced by someone else, with Jordaens' own translation being lost without a trace. The style and trans-

47 An overview of Jordaens' work and of some early bibliographical records is discussed in Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 10–19.

48 Jordaens, *Planctus* (1885), pp. 323–333; Jordaens, *Conflictus* (1985) and (1986).

49 Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 17–18.

50 See De Baere (1993a), p. 157.

lation strategy used in *De calculo* certainly need in-depth analysis before any definitive conclusions can be drawn. Moreover, the dissemination pattern of *De calculo* is dissimilar to that of *De ornatu* but consistent with that of Grote's *Ornatus*, as *De calculo* is found mainly with Carthusians and Crosier Fathers in the German cultural sphere.[51]

Jordaens' translation of *The Spiritual Tabernacle* is no longer extant. Miraeus, who in 1622 could still consult the now-lost Groenendaal codex with all of Jordaens' translations, provides some specific information. He reports that in the prologue Jordaens talks of his collaboration with Ruusbroec in translating *Vanden geesteliken tabernakel*.[52] Miraeus also cites a paragraph from the prologue in which Jordaens praises Ruusbroec profusely.[53] It has been argued that a short Latin excerpt from *The Spiritual Tabernacle* found in a Vienna manuscript was probably not taken from Jordaens' translation but, rather, resulted from an isolated translation experiment.[54]

The history of scholarship on the translation of *The Seven Rungs* is complex. For a long time the translation extant in three manuscripts was attributed to Geert Grote, following the information in those manuscripts, and the text was published as such.[55] A study of the characteristics of style and terminology, however, led Reypens to conclude that the translation ought to be attributed to Willem Jordaens.[56] This conclusion has remained unchallenged since.[57] Another translation, found only in some excerpts in a manuscript in Giessen, has since been attributed to Geert Grote.[58]

---

51 See p. 278.

52 Miraeus (1622), p. 35: 'Jordaens actually explicity says, in the Prologue to the book of *The Spiritual Tabernacle*, that he received help from Ruubroec himself, who was still alive.' (*Iordanus certe, in Prologo ad librum de Spirituali Tabernaculo, diserte fatetur, in transferendo, ab ipso Rusbroquio adhuc superstite, se adiutum fuisse*).

53 Miraeus (1622), pp. 12–13, text of excerpt plus introduction: *Guilielmi Iordani, In Prologo librorum Rusbroquij de Tabernaculo spirituali, quos reddidit Iordanus, ubi agit de Rusbroquio adhuc superstite: Possem piorum quaestioni verum et admirabile dare responsum / nisi divinus sermo prohiberet dicens: Ne laudaveris hominem in vita sua. Sufficiat ergo eius a fructibus suis cognitionem: quoniam re vera quae docuit et scripsit haec et opere complevit. Admirantes enim doctrinam eius laico conscriptam sermone, faciliter perpendere possunt, ipsum nequaquam didicisse eam ab homine aut ab humana scientia, sed accepisse a Deo, et a divina sapientia.*

54 See De Baere (1996a).

55 *Trappen* (1911). The text is wrongly attributed to Grote in MSS Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2603–19 and 1610–28.

56 Reypens (1950b).

57 Ampe (1975a), pp. 297–350, *passim*; De Baere (1993a), p. 158.

58 See p. 256.

Both translations attributed to Jordaens were published in print in Italy in 1538:

> *D. Ioannis Ruisbroici canonici regularis libelli duo, vere divini. Prior, De septem scalae divini amoris, seu vitae sanctae gradibus. Posterior, De perfectione filiorum Dei. Nuper inventi, et nunc primum in lucem aediti*, Bononiae impraessum ex officina Vincentii Bonardi Parmensis, et Marci Antonii Carpensis Anno Domini MDXXXVII, mense novembri.[59]

The editor of these texts, the Bologna priest Nicolaus Bargilesius, informs us in an introductory letter to the prior of the Bologna Charterhouse that the Carthusians themselves had provided him with the manuscripts upon which he based his edition.[60]

Impulse: Geert Grote and the *Devotio Moderna*

Geert Grote, Ornatus desponsationis spiritualis

Several considerations provided the impetus for Geert Grote (1340–1384), founder of the *Devotio Moderna*, to translate Ruusbroec's *Spiritual Espousals*. The Deventer-born son of a merchant, former student at the University of Paris and fervent convert, probably met Ruusbroec in 1378/1379.[61] He made his translation out of admiration for Ruusbroec's works and teaching and in order to promote the dissemination of the text. He did, however, have concerns over some essential doctrinal aspects, which he discreetly smoothed over in his translation. According to Hofman, the editor of Grote's *Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis*, he made his translation *c*.1383/1384.[62] Other dates that have been suggested vary from 'c. 1375, in the Monnikhuizen Charterhouse' to 'about 1380.'[63]

---

59 Quoted from Ampe (1975a), pp. 389–395; see also *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), nº 101, pp. 238–241.

60 Ampe (1975a), p. 390.

61 An analysis of the relationship between Ruusbroec and Grote is provided by Épiney-Burgard (1970), pp. 103–114; referenced in Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), pp. xii–xiii.

62 Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), pp. xxiii–xxvii.

63 *The Spiritual Espousals* in Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 3, pp. 114–115. See Alaerts (1985), pp. 142–153, esp. pp. 151–152; Épiney-Burgard (1970), p. 109, more cautiously suggests that Grote possibly started working on his translation in Monnikhuizen.

Grote felt compelled to make a new translation as he deemed Willem Jordaens' free rendering in *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum* to be inadequate. He must have hoped his own translation could replace Jordaens', and that it would be the beginning of the dissemination of Ruusbroec among a new readership. He wanted to provide this new audience with a simple, straightforward translation. Hence, Grote rather rigidly adheres to the principle of a literal translation. He translates *verbum e verbo*, which results in unpretentious Latin and even expressions that are clearly influenced by Middle Dutch syntax.[64]

For obvious reasons, Jordaens' translation did not influence that of Grote: their basic principles as translators, and *ipso facto* the results of their efforts, are entirely different.

With regard to style and language Geert Grote's translation presents a very different and less complicated case than Jordaens' translation. Grote himself informs us of the manner and objective of his translation:[65]

> This book, originally written in the Germanic vernacular, was then translated into Latin, not by a translation rendering sense for sense, nor sentence for sentence, but almost word for word, without embellishment of style. For this was both convenient for the translator and not unprofitable for the common and unlearned readership. Also, while translating, he did not dare add grace to the style, fearing that in these matters exceeding his experience, he would seem to add or remove something from his source text. As a consequence the Latin translation has lost this savory freshness which the novel and fitting harmony of the Dutch words, unusual for our ears in these matters, but appropriate, brought about; but the familiar Latin speech compensates for this through its orderliness, ease and familiarity, as well as through its ability to permeate the digestive system of the mind. And may the reader, I beg, not be offended when he finds the terms *unio, unitas, unitio* and the like sometimes understood in a specific and sometimes in a general sense. For a mere word by word translation could not always retain the peculiarities of the text.[66]

64 Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), pp. xxvii–xxx.

65 The prologue is discussed in Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), pp. xv–xvi; Épiney-Burgard (1970), pp. 115–117.

66 *Hic liber, in teutonico idiomate ab initio compositus, postea in latinum non interpretatione sensus ex sensu, nec sententie ex sententia, sed verbi fere ex verbo sine stili lepore translatus est. Nam et hoc transferenti fuit facile et communitati seu ruditati legentium non inutile. Nec ausus fuit transferens stilo decus tribuere, ne in tantis rebus suam experientiam excedentibus exemplari quicquam addere vel detrahere videretur. Unde consecutum est*

Grote is keenly aware of the various translation strategies, the importance of style, and their socio-cultural implications. The prologue opens with implicit references both to remarks on the translation principles of Jerome and the choices made by Jordaens.[67] From the two options Jerome presents, Grote chooses the principle that Jordaens rejected. Grote is afraid of unwillingly adding or removing something to or from the text by an ornate style. He also notes that applying literary embellishment would make the text more difficult and thus exceed the grasp of his intended readership. Grote therefore made a translation *sine stili lepore*—without attractiveness of style. He apologizes for the fact that some of the freshness of the original Middle Dutch might be lost, but he hopes that the general accessibility of the translation will be a compensation. He did find, however, that not every word could be translated literally, and for that he also apologizes.

As Grote explains his objectives and fears, and defends his own choice, he is in fact commenting on Jordaens' translation. Grote identified fundamental problems with Jordaens' translation, because of which it did not answer the needs he saw. *De ornatu* was too difficult for his intended readership, which he identified as 'common and unlearned readers.' He also objects to Jordaens' exuberant stylistic adornment, as it might not do justice to Ruusbroec's text. He therefore chooses to make a new translation that should be the complete opposite of that of Jordaens. Grote's translation is indeed both literal and accurate.[68] The consequence is, as Rijcklof Hofman observes: 'Grote's Latin suffered from his close adherence to the vernacular original. His translation contains many an expression clearly influenced by Middle Dutch syntax.'[69] Grote's Latin is full of 'Dutchisms' on every level, from words, to expressions, to syntax.

Dissemination of Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis

Did Grote's translation achieve its goals? His translation was almost exclusively read by Carthusians in the German cultural sphere.[70] The few exceptions, both

---

ut latina translatio id sapide viriditatis quod teutonicorum verborum auribus in hiis rebus inconsueta, sed apta, sed nova congruitas adduxit, amitteret; hoc tamen ordine, facilitate et memoria descensuque in mentis digestivam consuetus sermo latinus recompensat. Nec sit, rogo, lector captiosus si hos terminos 'unio,' 'unitas,' 'unitio' vel similes aliquando proprie, aliquando large captos inveniat. Nam non potuit verbi dumtaxat ex verbo translatio undique proprietatem servare sermonis. Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), pp. 3–4.

67 See p. 237.

68 Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), pp. xxvii–xxx.

69 Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), p. xxx.

70 See the list of manuscripts in Appendix 1 at the end of this chapter.

with regard to the religious affiliation or the region, can easily be connected to the general pattern. One copy was owned by the monastery of Canons Regular in Böddeken that was a member of the Windesheim chapter, and hence the connection with the *Devotio Moderna* is clear.[71] This manuscript was itself the exemplar for the copy from the Erfurt Charterhouse.[72] The copy owned by Clairlieu Abbey in Huy can be explained from the fact that the Crosier Fathers in Huy and Liège in the Southern Low Countries belonged to the monastic 'network' of the *Devotio Moderna*.[73] Finally, one copy belonged to the Benedictines in Trier.[74] Again, this is not strange if we note that it is textually closely connected to a manuscript from the Carthusians in Trier, and to a copy owned by a house of the Brethren of the Common Life in the same region.[75]

In all cases, the textual witnesses belong to either the network of the *Devotio Moderna*, to the like-minded Carthusians, or to a monastery in close contact with either one of those circles.

Geert Grote's Other Ruusbroec Translations

Apart from *The Spiritual Espousals*, Geert Grote is believed to have translated *The Seven Rungs* and *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*. There is abundant external evidence for Grote's translation of the *Espousals*. A second Grote translation, of *The Seven Rungs*, is mentioned in Groenendaal MS A and in the list of Miraeus.[76] Thomas a Kempis and Petrus Horn agree in accrediting him with the translation.[77] Rudolf Dier does not.[78]

---

71 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, germ. qu. 1398, Germany (Böddeken, Saint-Meinulphus), 1448; Canons Regular.

72 Weimar, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik/Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Q. 51, Germany (Erfurt, Salvatorberg), 1489; Carthusians.

73 Liège, Bibliothèque Publique André Minon, Sect. hist., 6 N 8, Southern Netherlands (Huy, Clairlieu), *c.*1440–1450; Crosier Fathers.

74 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 14721–24, Germany (Trier, Saint-Mary), XVc and 1470; Benedictines.

75 Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 1669/350, Germany (Trier, Saint-Albans), XVd; Carthusians. Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek, 753, Germany (Bad Godesberg, Marienforst), *c.*1460; Brethren of the Common Life.

76 For MS A, see Appendix 3 at the end of this chapter; for Miraeus, see p. 248.

77 Thomas a Kempis, *Chronica* (1922), p. 484: *Transtulit duos libros domini Iohannis Ruesbroeck, uidelicet Ecce sponsus et librum de gradibus amoris de Teutonico in Latinum*. Also in Horn, *Vita* (1909), p. 370.

78 Dier only mentions a translation of *The Espousals*; Dier van Muiden (1719), p. 5.

It must be noted that no external evidence exists for a third Grote translation, that of *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*. No biographer or bibliographer mentions this translation, and the textual witnesses do not name its author. The attribution is, nevertheless, generally accepted, and De Baere has argued strongly in favor of this attribution.[79] De Baere's analysis is based on an inevitably small sample of mystical terms. Therefore, the conclusion to attribute the translation to Grote could only become definitive, in my opinion, after a more extensive analysis, comparing additional elements of language and style with Grote's *Ornatus*.

The translation of the *Mirror* is extant in three complete copies and two excerpts.[80] It opens with an introductory text in all three manuscripts, in which it says:

> The following letter on the most sacred sacrament of the altar was originally written in the vernacular by the venerable father John of Ruusbroec, the first prior of the monastery of Groenendaal near Brussels of the Order of Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, at the request of a certain Poor Clare in the city of Brussels, to whom he speaks. But afterwards, so that people from other languages would also be able to read and understand it and progress in virtues, it has been translated from this by someone else into Latin, in a plain style and by translating word for word rather than sense for sense.[81]

This informative text has been called both a prologue and a rubric.[82] Since the perspective is that of a third person introducing the text, I would suggest it is a rubric, at least in character, rather than a prologue. The rubric elaborates on the translation strategy and objective. The description of the translation strat-

79 De Baere (1993a); van Dijk (2003), pp. 576–579.

80 The manuscripts are listed in Appendix 1 at the end of this chapter.

81 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 9320–24, fol. 7ora: *Hec epistola subscripta de sacrosancto sacramento altaris ab inicio edita fuit in vulgari ydiomate a venerabili viro domino johanne de rusbroec, primo priore monasterij vallis viridis iuxta bruxellam ordinis canonicorum regularium sancti augustini, ad instanciam cuiusdam sanctimonialis clare in opido bruxellensi, ad quam loquitur. Sed postea, ut homines aliarum linguarum eciam legere possent et intelligere ac in virtutibus proficere, ex eadem per quemdam alium translata est simplici stilo et magis verbum e verbo quam sensus ex sensu transferendo*; quoted in Ampe (1975b), esp. pp. 155–156; partially quoted in De Baere (1993a), p. 157; Geerardijn (1952–1954).

82 Ampe (1975b), p. 155, calls it a rubric; De Baere (1993a), p. 161, calls it a prologue.

egy is very similar to that in the prologue of Grote's *Ornatus*.[83] Still, as De Baere concedes, any prologue (or rubric) to a literal translation would contain comparable statements. Also, the resulting literalness of the translation, similar to that in *Ornatus*, is to be expected. In any case, the third-person perspective, suggesting that the rubric was written by someone other than the translator, further decreases the value of this small text as an argument for the attribution to Grote.

A series of excerpts from a translation of *The Seven Rungs*, found in one manuscript, is believed to have been part of Grote's translation.[84] The excerpts contain summaries of the first four rungs and an almost complete translation of the fifth rung. Again, the simple fact that the excerpts are summaries poses methodological problems with regard to determining their status, and hence their possible attribution. For lack of a full text of the alleged Grote translation, it is impossible to determine whether these excerpts were written as summaries on the basis of the Middle Dutch text, or were taken from a complete translation. This uncertainty makes the attribution to Grote all the more problematic.

In sum, the evidence for the attribution to Grote of the extant translations of the *Mirror* and the excerpts from the *Rungs* ranges from preliminary (*Mirror*) to shaky (*Rungs*).

Impulse or Impediment: The Role of Style

There can be little doubt that the two most significant early Ruusbroec translations are those of Jordaens and Grote of *The Spiritual Espousals*. As we have seen, they each use different translation strategies aiming to achieve different objectives. The success and dissemination of both texts is correspondingly diverse.

First, the dissemination patterns of the translations by Willem Jordaens and Geert Grote are remarkably dissimilar. The Jordaens translation was initially copied in some nearby monasteries in Brabant and northern France, but then travelled decidedly south, passing through Paris and crossing the Alps. Surprisingly, the translation reached the peak of its popularity in Italy. Of 12 extant manuscripts, five originated in Italy. Jordaens' translation penetrated

83 See p. 253.

84 Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek 753. See Ampe (1975b), pp. 133–172; De Baere (1993a), pp. 158–159; van Dijk (2003), pp. 570–576.

into the regions of other vernaculars. Two manuscripts that have been lost fit this pattern.

Grote's *Ornatus*, in contrast, travelled from Deventer, in the heartland of the *Devotio Moderna*, into the culturally and linguistically closely related neighboring Rhineland.[85] It then went south along the Mosel to Trier and along the Rhine to Mainz, where the dissemination of the translation came to a halt. Hofman rightly observes that Grote's translation did not succeed in making Ruusbroec's text known beyond the Dutch- or Low German-speaking regions, where the original vernacular could be understood anyway.[86]

Apparently, the Jordaens translation found a warm reception in the Romance cultural sphere, while the Grote translation was read and copied in the German cultural sphere. I have argued that these conspicuously different dissemination patterns are to a large extent a consequence of the style and level of the language used in each translation.[87]

An Evaluation of Translation Strategies in MS British Library 6B45

In an anonymous additional prologue to Grote's work in the London manuscript BL 6B45, we find an evaluation of the *Espousals* translations of Jordaens and Grote and of their respective methods and objectives. The commentary provides clear insight into contemporary perceptions of both texts.

> *Item. Another prologue by the same translator.*[88]
>
> Here follows the treatise *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum*[89] that was first written in Germanic by some devout priest, who was believed to be a simple layperson, named John of Ruusbroec in Groenendaal close to Brussels. But the style and content of this book and of others he also wrote in the vernacular, namely, *On Seven Closures*,[90] and *On the Taking of the Eucharist*,[91] prove that he was of great knowledge, either inspired or acquired.

85 The manuscripts are listed in Appendix 1 at the end of this chapter.

86 Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), p. xv.

87 Schepers (2010), pp. 525–558.

88 This is clearly not true, since further down, Geert Grote is mentioned in the third person.

89 This being the title of the Jordaens translation, it is most likely that this second prologue is a contamination of several earlier texts.

90 *The Seven Rungs*, in Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 9.

91 *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*, in Ruusbroec, *Opera omnia*, 8.

> The following book was splendidly translated into Latin, while retaining the meaning, by the same priest,[92] uttering with much eloquence science from the trivium[93] from the philosophical and theological faculty, in a venerable style. Afterwards the book was translated by master Geert, called Grote, again into Latin, almost word by word, so that beginners would be more humbly instructed by it, just as the erudite could be better informed by the earlier translation.
>
> What follows is the second translation, namely, the one from master Geert. This treatise *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum* is divided in three books. The first book is called *On the Moral and Active Life*, and it contains 38 chapters. The second book is called *On the Spiritual and Affective Life*, and it contains 66 chapters. The third book is called *On the Supernatural and Contemplative Life*, and it contains 6 chapters.[94]

The author of the prologue comments not only on the two translations but also on the original vernacular text, in each case commenting on the implications of style. The style of the vernacular text proves to the commentator that the author was highly knowledgeable. The style of the translations says something about the objectives of the translators, rather than about their personal character and qualities. The commentator makes an explicit connection between style and intended audience. The first translation, he says, was written in a venerable style (*venerabili stilo*), and was intended for the more erudite (*eruditiores*). The second translation, the one by Grote, was made 'word for word,' that

---

92 This person was also duped by Jordaens' *Prologue*, in which he spoke as if he were Ruusbroec himself—*in persona ipsius*.

93 'Science from the trivium': there might also be the pejorative connotation of 'not very important knowledge.'

94 Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), p. 4: *Item alius prologus eiusdem translatoris. Sequitur tractatus De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum quem prescripsit in theutonico quidam devotus sacerdos, qui quasi simplex laicus credebatur, nomine Johannes de Rusbroec in viridivalle iuxta Bruxellam. Set stilus et materia huius libri et aliorum quos composuit similiter in vulgari videlicet de VII clausuris et de eukaristie sumpcione, eum probant scientie maxime vel infuse vel adquisite. Translatus tamen fuit sequens liber egregie in latinum sensu servato per eundem sacerdotem, cum multa facundia phandi scientie trivialis philosophie et theologice facultatis venerabili stilo. Postea per magistrum Gerardum magnum dictus liber fuit translatus eciam in latinum, quasi de verbo ad verbum, ut *incipientes exinde humilius instruerentur, sicut per translationem priorem eruditiores possunt melius informari. Hic sequitur secunda translation, videlicet magistri Gerardi. Tractatus iste De omatu spiritualium nuptiarum dividitur in tres libros. Primus intitulatur De vita morali et activa. In isto libro continentur XXXVIII capitula. Secundus liber intitulatur De vita spirituali et affectiva. In isto libro continentur sexaginta et VI capitula. Tercius liber titulatur De vita supernaturali et contemplativa. In isto libro continentur sex capitula.*

is, literally, and hence intended for 'beginners' (*incipientes*). The commentator sees a clear connection between style and the cultural level of the audience. This lucid analysis suggests that the difference in style should lead to clearly different dissemination patterns—which has indeed proven to be the case.

Critical Voices on Jordaens' Style

A surprisingly large number of people commented on the style and language of the Jordaens translation, from the 14th to the 16th century. They were disapproving of, apologetic about, or amazed by Jordaens' *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum*.

Jordaens himself was the first to comment. He explained his use of style as a necessity to make the text acceptable to the Latin world. He makes allusions to the connection between the stylistic level of the text and the cultural level of the intended audience. He aims for the higher socio-cultural milieu, such as that of Cistercian monks.

Grote implicitly criticizes *De ornatu* for being too free and stylistically too ornate. His intended readership consisted of ordinary or uneducated readers. Grote therefore made a translation *sine stili lepore*—without attractiveness of style and easily accessible.

The note on Jordaens in the Groenendaal obituary does not mention the style of his translations but states that he was an outstanding cleric, a learned and cultivated man. The note on Jan Spieghel in the Groenendaal Obituary, however, about whom Jordaens wrote his *Planctus*, contains a remarkable evaluation of the style of that work: 'Johannes de Cureghem, deacon. Whose life full of virtue was depicted by father Willem Jordaens in an 'elaborate' style, veracious nonetheless, and in a succinct manner.'[95] Again, the style of Jordaens' writing is seen as noteworthy. The key term here is *curiosus*, which means 'elaborate or sophisticated.' It characterizes a style that is used to make a display.

In their polemic on *De ornatu*, Jean Gerson and Jan van Schoonhoven both discuss Jordaens' style.[96]

Henricus Pomerius (1382–1469), the first historiographer of Groenendaal and biographer of Ruusbroec, called the faithfulness of Jordaens' translation

95 Dykmans (1940), p. 259: *A.D. M.CCC.Lviij obiit fr. Iohannes de Cureghem, dyaconus. Huius uitam uirtutibus plenam fr. Wilhelmus Iordani curioso stilo, neque minus ueraci, compendioseque depinxit*.

96 See p. 266.

into question.[97] He used its alleged inaccuracy to put the blame for the controversy with Gerson squarely on Jordaens. He alone would have been responsible for Gerson's 'misunderstanding' of *De ornatu*, whose misguided criticism could be excused, since it was caused by Jordaens' faulty translation:

> It might serve as an excuse to this venerable man, that he himself did not see the original writings of the prior, but a translation, that was quite elaborately composed, in which the intention of the aforementioned prior was made less clear, and the sequence of words was excessively adorned with rhetorical style.[98]

In 1512, a printed edition of Jordaens' *De ornatu* was published by Henri Estienne in Paris.[99] Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (†1536), who played an important role in the dissemination of Christian humanism in France, wrote a dedicatory letter that provides information on the reception context for *De ornatu* at that time. He seems afraid that the effect of Gerson's criticism might still persist and, thus, influence the possible success of the edition. His letter is directed to a certain Remundus, who cannot be identified with full certainty and who apparently is concerned over Gerson's verdict on *De ornatu*. The argument of Jacques Lefèvre to excuse Ruusbroec's text is fundamentally different from that of Pomerius. Whereas Pomerius criticized the style of Jordaens for distorting the content, Lefèvre clearly has no problem with the style; on the contrary, he even asserts that the author writes 'supremely elegantly for his time.'[100] Ruusbroec must have been a highly literate man, and his literary sophistication speaks in favor of his work. Lefèvre's argument to explain Gerson's censure is that he must have come across a corrupted version of the text.[101] Lefèvre contends that

97 Pomerius, *De origine* (1885), pp. 257–322. See Ampe (1975a), pp. 246–256, esp. p. 250.

98 Pomerius, *De origine* (1885), p. 288: *Cui etiam uenerabili domino hoc subseruit pro excusatione, quod non scripta prioris originalia, sed translata ipse uiderat, satis subtiliter compilata, in quibus intentio dicti prioris minus explicata, et series uerborum sub stilo rhetorico fuit admodum adornata.*

99 Moreau (1977), p. 2, nº 448; Renouard (1843), p. 11, nº 4.

100 Lefèvre says that this would be the judgment of grammarians: 'and grammarians who read it, will find the author supremely elegant for his time' (*Et grammatici qui hunc legunt, iudicabunt authorem pro illa tempestate apprime elegantem*).

101 'I therefore think that what happened to Gerson, who certainly is an honorable man, is that he came across a corrupted text. Which also happened to me at some time. But when I found a true and emendated one, after a change of mind I started to admire whom I first thought of as illiterate. For the same reason I think therefore that he [Gerson] was

the right version of the text will demonstrate that Ruusbroec was a literate and admirable man.

The Cologne Carthusian Gerard Kalckbrenner (1494–1566) pours scorn on the anonymous translator of *De ornatu*. He expresses his annoyance in the introduction to Ruusbroec's *Opera*, published in 1552, that were translated by his fellow-Carthusian Laurentius Surius.[102] Kalckbrenner does not mention the style of the translation but focuses, rather, on the additions, which are, of course, an accepted element in Jerome's translation model. Kalckbrenner finds that the unknown translator should be ashamed of these additions.[103]

All commentators on the Jordaens translation express a strong awareness of style and its implications for the function and reception of the text. Irrespective of whether Jordaens' translation conveyed the content of *The Spiritual Espousals* accurately, it was certainly done in a style that did not go unnoticed.

Jordaens did indeed advocate a particularly free method of translating. Furthermore, his translation boasts numerous elements of *ornatus*, such as alliteration, assonance, *color rhythmicus*, and an intensification in the use of imagery and biblical references. His language and style are flamboyant by all standards. But it should be expressly noted that all of this does not in any way change the fact that Jordaens essentially remains faithful to the content of Ruusbroec's original text. Jordaens really did what he set out to do according to his statement in the opening letter: '*librum transtulimus in latinum, seu potius, sensum libri latinis vestivimus indumentis*.'

Impediment: The Gerson Censure

There is no way of telling how the dissemination of Willem Jordaens' *De ornatu* would have evolved had there not been the censure by Jean Gerson (1363–1429). It is, however, a conspicuous fact that the long hiatus in the dissemination of *De ornatu* started with his condemnation of the third book. Another

---

mistaken […]. Therefore read without worry what Gerson himself would have read without worry and even with joy.' (*Arbitror igitur Gersoni, probo quidem viro, id accidisse, quod in corruptum codicem inciderit. Quod et alias michi accidit. Vbi autem incidi in verum et emendatum, quem iudicaveram illiteratum, mutata sententia cepi admirari. Simili igitur ratione eum allucinatum puto* […] *Lege ergo securus que et ipse Gerso securus legisset et etiam delectabiliter*. See Rice (1972), n° 91, pp. 276–280.

102 See p. 273.

103 For more on Kalckbrenner's introductory letter, see p. 270.

reason to consider the Gerson censure to have been effective is the comparable hiatus in the circulation of Grote's translation, in this case from *c.*1410 to 1450.[104] Moreover, it is certain that the dissemination of *De ornatu* did not resume for a long time after Gerson's critique. Renewed interest in *De ornatu* became manifest only with the printed edition of 1512. The censure of Gerson thus proved to be the strongest impediment yet for Ruusbroec's widening international fame as a mystical writer. The Ruusbroec-Gerson controversy took place only decades after Ruusbroec's death. His honor was being defended by Jan van Schoonhoven (1356–1432). In the following I will primarily focus on those aspects of the controversy related to the use of—the Latin—language.

So what precisely had been the course of events?[105] In the spiritual network of Groenendaal, Jordaens' ambitious, brand-new Latin translation of *The Spiritual Espousals* must have been celebrated as a feat of vernacular mysticism entering the international Latin discourse. Groenendaal had close contacts with the Charterhouse of Herne, and it is generally assumed that Bartholomaeus Clantier from Herne brought *De ornatu* to the attention of Jean Gerson.[106] The latter, Chancellor of the University of Paris, was omnipresent in academic disputes and maintained very friendly relations with Carthusians. Gerson addressed two letters to a certain Bartholomaeus on the topic of Ruusbroec's *De ornatu*, and this addressee is believed to have been from Herne. No evidence about Bartholomaeus' initiative has survived. The specific motive for bringing *De ornatu* to the attention of Gerson remains unclear:[107]

---

104 For the stemma codicum, see Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), p. lxxxviii.

105 The Ruusbroec-Gerson controversy and its aftermath have been discussed in some 2000 pages by André Combes (1945–1972); it was also analyzed in great detail in Ampe (1975a), pp. 17–257. A summary of the controversy—of which this paragraph is a shorter version—is found in Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 69–85.

106 Barthélemy Clantier alias Thonis Clautier (†1427), professed in Herne *c.*1370; cf. *Nouvelle bibliographie cartusienne*, 2nd edition (Grande Chartreuse 2005), p. 78. Even though there is scholarly agreement on this identification, it should be noted that there is no solid proof. See Ampe (1975a), pp. 54–85; Combes (1948), pp. 13–77, esp. § II, pp. 46–53. In the opening sentence of his *Epistola I*, Gerson writes to Bartholomaeus: *Pridem librum quemdam per te habitum, cuius titulus est De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum, in transcursu legeram. Nouissime illum attentius relegens* . . . ; Combes (1945a), p. 615; discussion in Combes (1948), pp. 39–52. The phrase *per te habitum* is ambiguous: it may mean that Gerson received the book from Bartholomaeus, or it may mean that Gerson knows that Bartholomaeus owns the book to which he is referring. Combes has written 13 pages arguing for the latter; still, the argument to me seems unconvincing.

107 The discussion by Combes, despite its extensiveness, does not clarify the matter. See also Ampe (1975a), p. 55, n. 13; Ampe assumes that Bartholomaeus probably praised both the author and his work.

he either asked Gerson to review *De ornatu* because of persisting doubts concerning the acceptability of certain phrases, or the worries had subsided and the Carthusians were now proud of this work. In any event, once Gerson had reached the conclusion that the third book of *De ornatu* was suspect of heresy, he pronounced a harsh verdict against the work in his *Epistola prima ad Bartholomaeum*. The *Epistola prima* is still extant in at least six copies, and a large part of the intellectual world seems to have been familiar with it.

Jean Gerson, Epistola I ad fratrem Bartholomaeum

In his *Epistola prima*, Gerson is clearly annoyed over the veneration Ruusbroec receives from his admirers.[108] From what he has heard, they believe the author of *De ornatu* to be an unpretentious person, who has received the grace of direct divine inspiration. Gerson does not believe this, nor does he accept the irrefutable truth of *De ornatu*, and he proceeds to refute both claims. In rejecting the alleged divine inspiration, Gerson falls victim to a misunderstanding. He points to the first-person statement in the *Epistola ad fratres de capella Thosan* where it is said that the author (that is, of the *translation*) has been toiling over the translation of *De ornatu*:[109]

> This is, most beloved, what we then wrote plainly in the Dutch language for simple and uneducated lay people, as the Lord inspired it, of which we now at your request, not so much the Dutch words, but the meaning gathered in the mind, have translated with great effort—as our modest competence, with the help of God, was able to—into the Latin language, desiring vigorously that you will repay for our work through the suffrages of your prayers. Be well, so that we may be well together in the Lord. Amen. End.[110]

The key point for Gerson is that the style of *De ornatu* is very sophisticated, and apparently in accordance with the precepts of rhetoric. He therefore contends that the author cannot have been directly inspired by the Holy Spirit,

---

108 Combes (1945a), pp. 615–635; Gerson (1960), n° 13, pp. 55–62. (Glorieux dates the letter to 1402).

109 Combes (1945a): *De ornatu*, liber tertius, p. 615.

110 *Hec sunt, karissimi, que dudum simplicibus et indoctis laycis theutonico sermone simpliciter, prout dominus aspirauit, conscripsimus, quorum nunc uobis iubentibus non uerba theutonica, sed sensum in animo recollectum latino eloquio—prout facultatula nostra, deo tamen iuuante, ualuit—laboriose satis transtulimus, postulantes obnixe ut labori nostro orationum uestrarum suffragia rependatis* (3, 299–306).

since this would not result in such artificial use of language. Gerson, however, ignores the fact that *De ornatu* is a Latin *translation* of a Middle Dutch original, as is explicitly stated in the *Epistola*. Translating may have been laborious, but that does not preclude the possibility that the original text was composed without any effort. Gerson does not recognize this possibility. Gerson simply deems it impossible for a text in which style and *cursus* patterns indicate very human effort and a high level of academic education to be the product of direct divine inspiration.

The second issue is the status of indisputable truth that the admirers claim for *De ornatu*. Gerson's approval of *De ornatu* gradually turns into dismay as he carefully reads the third book. Here he finds statements that by his judgment are intolerable, since they seem to suggest an ontological union between the mystic and God by which the mystic becomes part of the divine being. In the later phases of the controversy, Gerson will continue to repeat this central point of his criticism.[111] Gerson expresses concern over the fact that the third book of *De ornatu* deals with subject matter that he considers to be the domain of expert theologians rather than that of ardently devout people.

Gerson suspects Bartholomaeus to be shocked to hear that a wise and devout person like Ruusbroec could be guilty of grave doctrinal errors. Generously he adds that Ruusbroec was certainly not the only person to err from the true beliefs in such a way, and he expounds on the fact that it is preferable by far simply to be devout than to try to penetrate the highest mysteries of faith. Gerson ends with an axiom intended to convince Bartholomaeus that certain spheres of spiritual life should not be entered by merely devout persons: 'Everyone should be given authority with respect to his expertise' (*Vnicuique in sua arte perito credendum est*).[112]

The Ruusbroec Defense by Johannes van Schoonhoven

Gerson's censure of Ruusbroec's *De ornatu* must have shocked not just Bartholomaeus but also the Groenendaal community. Johannes van Schoonhoven took it upon himself to defend the honor and orthodoxy of Ruusbroec after he had learned of the ruinous assault by Gerson.[113] He did so in two texts: first in his *Commendatio seu defensio libri fratris Johannis Ruusbroec*

111 Here and in the following I will not pursue this doctrinal criticism of Ruusbroec in detail, as it does not concern the translation.

112 Combes (1945a), p. 635.

113 Jan van Schoonhoven (1356–1432) was born in Schoonhoven, south of Gouda. He studied in Paris and entered the Groenendaal community in 1377. See Gruijs (1974).

De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum.[114] Most probably this *Commendatio* is a preliminary version of Schoonhoven's apology, not meant for publication. Later the *Commendatio* was transformed into what we know as the *Epistola responsalis*.[115] This was the definitive, polished, and published version of the defense of Ruusbroec.[116] Since the *Commendatio* and the *Epistola responsalis* have essentially the same content, and since it was the *Epistola responsalis* that Gerson responded to, I will provide a summary of the *Epistola responsalis* only.

Schoonhoven's defense is based on four elements, three of which have to do with language, its use and its interpretation. First, Schoonhoven is convinced that Ruusbroec's propositions are entirely orthodox if they are understood according to the intention of their author. Second, Schoonhoven admits that some of Ruusbroec's propositions could have been phrased better. Third, he asserts that Ruusbroec spoke more clearly about the contested issues in some of his other works. Fourth, Schoonhoven claims that on concepts like *unio* and *transformatio*, religious people are to be trusted, rather than scholars whose views are based on the intellect instead of affection and experience.

In his *Epistola responsalis*, Schoonhoven announces a threefold defense.[117] First he will explain the true meaning and intent of Ruusbroec's words; second he will show that Ruusbroec's doctrine is perfectly consistent with the teaching of the Fathers; and third he will refute every single element of Gerson's charge, including the aspects that have to do with language and style. Only this third element will concern us here.

Schoonhoven asserts that Gerson entertained misconceptions about Ruusbroec's person on account of the excessive veneration of Ruusbroec admirers that he only knew from hearsay. Against these misconceptions he writes a demythologizing paragraph. Ruusbroec was not an illiterate, as Gerson mistakenly thinks. He was a priest and prior of Groenendaal, who wrote his works in the vernacular because he did not know Latin well enough to use the language as an author. The elegant style of the work must be attributed

114 Combes (1945a), pp. 684–716.

115 Combes (1945a), pp. 717–772.

116 On the differences between *Commendatio* and *Epistola*, see Ampe (1960). See Ampe (1975a), pp. 145–157, where Ampe seems to have abandoned his earlier views in the article and subscribes to the generally accepted view on the relation between the two texts.

117 The date of the *Epistola responsalis* is not quite certain. A date is mentioned in one manuscript, but the other manuscripts have variant readings: *Vixit enim homo iste dei* (*i.e., Ruusbroec*) *postquam istud lamentabile schisma in ecclesia surrexerit, nam a tempore mortis suae XXV anni fluxerunt, uel circiter, usque ad tempus praesens, uidelicet cum scribitur M CCCC VIII*. For a discussion of this note, see Combes (1945a), pp. 388–414, 729, n. (f); Ampe (1975a), pp. 132–133.

to the translator—whom Schoonhoven does not identify—who presented the translation as if it was done by Ruusbroec himself (*in persona ipsius*).[118] Schoonhoven argues that the content of *De ornatu* is certainly beyond reproach, even though the style might well be questionable:

> If then the style of the book translated into Latin smells more like human than divine eloquence, this should not be imputed to the author but to the translator. Which translator, because of the fact that he put more effort into ornateness and eloquence of the work than perhaps he should have, sweat a lot over the translation of the aforementioned book.[119]

Each of the Ruusbroec propositions that Gerson had quoted and branded heretical is defended extensively by Schoonhoven.[120] In describing the highest forms of contemplation, however, a very specific type of language is used, in which words inevitably have a 'metaphorical' rather than a literal meaning. Schoonhoven concedes that Ruusbroec's statements in *De ornatu* are not always as clear as they should be and that he explained himself better in some of his other works, such as *De calculo vel de perfectione filiorum dei*. In those places he makes it abundantly clear that it is impossible for man to become deified and to lose his created being.[121]

Schoonhoven takes the required readers' benevolence a step further in stating that if some of Ruusbroec's propositions sound erroneous, this is merely a matter of words and therefore of little importance.[122]

It is not hard to imagine how these statements would infuriate Gerson. He must have read Schoonhoven's letter with increasing anger anyway, since his competence in the matters concerned is implicitly called into question at numerous occasions. On one occasion Schoonhoven even overtly tells Gerson that he would do better to acknowledge that he cannot understand Ruusbroec's teaching than to accuse him of heresy.[123]

---

118 Cf. Combes (1945a), pp. 727–728.

119 *Si ergo stilus libri in latinum translati magis redoleat humanam eloquentiam quam diuinam, hoc non imputandum est actori, sed translatori. Qui quidem translator, pro eo quod ornatui et eloquentiae sermonum plus operam dedit quam forte expedit, in praedicti libri translatione multum desudauit . . .* Combes (1945a), p. 730.

120 Combes (1945a), pp. 748–754 (the non-literal propositions attributed to Ruusbroec by Gerson); pp. 754–765 (the six literal Ruusbroec propositions).

121 Combes (1945a), pp. 737–738.

122 Combes (1945a), p. 747.

123 Combes (1945a), p. 737.

This *Epistola responsalis* was unlikely to convince Gerson to change his view, and quite clearly it did not, as was soon to become apparent from his *Epistola secunda*.

Epistola II ad fratrem Bartholomaeum

The defense by Jan van Schoonhoven failed to achieve its objectives, with Gerson unwilling to compromise on any point. The *Epistola responsalis* succeeded only in irritating Gerson even more. In his terse *Epistola secunda*, he states that he has said what he had to say and is only willing to explain in a simple manner that his first letter was correct.[124]

Eight considerations serve to underscore the validity of his earlier harsh judgment. The first one is: 'In speaking we need to stick to certain rules' (*Nobis ad certam regulam loqui fas est*).[125] It is an angry response to Schoonhoven's statement that words are of relative importance. Gerson could not possibly agree that wording is less important than content.

The third consideration, *Unicuique in sua arte perito credendum est*, focusses on who is entitled to speak on the highest form of theology, which is called mystical theology.[126] Schoonhoven seemed to imply that scholars are least fit to discuss these matters. Gerson ridicules this position, saying that it is ludicrous that everybody could apparently discuss mystical theology except the most talented and highly trained scholars.[127]

Reviewing his earlier position, Gerson remains convinced of the necessity of his censure. He is only prepared to repeat that the *author* of *De ornatu* can be absolved of heresy, since he seems to have expressed himself more clearly in other works. The verdict over *De ornatu* itself, however, must stand.[128] According to Gerson Ruusbroec had crossed a line that nobody is allowed to transgress.[129]

---

124 Combes (1945a), pp. 790–804; Gerson (1960), n° 26, pp. 97–103.

125 Combes (1945a), p. 791; in the *Epistola responsalis*: Combes (1945a), p. 747.

126 Combes (1945a), p. 794.

127 Combes (1945a), p. 795.

128 Combes (1945a), p. 800.

129 The later stages of the controversy (from 1413–*c.*1430), mostly entailing a repetition of arguments, are discussed in Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 82–85.

Impulse: Sixteenth-Century Mystical Renaissance in the Low Countries

The second quarter of the 16th century not only witnessed the rise of Lutheranism but also saw a parallel resurgence of Catholic mystical life and literature in the Low Countries and the neighboring Rhineland, as part of a Catholic reform movement. Revitalized mystical spirituality was lived in centers such as the Arnhem Saint-Agnes convent and was propagated by a publication offensive of the Cologne Carthusians from the Saint-Barbara Charterhouse.[130] The Carthusians wrote, translated, and edited works to nourish this spirituality. Noteworthy categories in their publication enterprise were translations of 14th-century mystical classics, on the one hand, and contemporaneous vernacular texts, on the other, among them *The Evangelical Pearl*.[131] The flurry of activities produced a formidable current that even took monumental boulders like the works of Dionysius the Carthusian along in its course.[132] One of the last products of this offensive, aimed at turning the tide of Lutheranism, was the Latin translation of the complete works of Ruusbroec.[133] The *Opera omnia* of Ruusbroec in the translation of the Cologne Carthusian Laurentius Surius came from the press in 1552.[134]

Surius (1522–1578) is a peculiar case. Born in Lübeck and belonging to a later generation than his fellow Carthusians Petrus Blomevenna (1466–1536), Dirk Loer (†1554), and Gerard Kalckbrenner (1494–1566), his work stands somewhat apart from his forebears from the Low Countries. He started working on his impressive oeuvre of translations of mystical and ascetical texts when the first period of intense editorial activity, from *c.*1520 to *c.*1540, had already ended.[135]

130 See Cornet, Faesen, Schepers & Clemens (2010). Also Schepers (2008) and (2010b).

131 First edition: *Margarita Evangelica. Een devoet boecxken geheeten Die Evangelische Peerle* (Utrecht: Jan Berntsen, 1535).

132 Chaix (1981), pp. 211–233 (with an overview of all the volumes).

133 See graph in Chaix (1981), opposite p. 94; also in Schepers (2008), p. 304.

134 *D. Ioannis Rusbrochii summi atque sanctissimi viri, quem insignis quidam theologus alterum Dionysium Areopagitam appellat, opera omnia. Nunc demum post annos ferme ducentos e Brabantiae Germanico idiomate reddita Latine per F. Laurentium Surium. Carthusiae Coloniensis alumnum*, Cologne 1552 (Facsimile: Farnborough, 1967).

135 Chaix (1984).

Tauler and Suso are among the important authors Surius translated into Latin.[136] He might also have been the translator of *The Evangelical Pearl*.[137]

Surius' translation of the *Opera* contains all authentic works, the seven Ruusbroec letters, several works no longer considered authentic, and biographical data based on Pomerius' *Vita*. Obviously, a work of such magnitude could not have been started and finished in the year of its publication. Already in 1549 he is said to have worked on the translation.[138] I dare wonder if he completed this giant task in just one year. In any case, the planning and execution phase of the translation takes the project closer into the vicinity of the preceding heyday of publications.

A project like the translation of Ruusbroec's oeuvre needs a clear objective as its driving force.[139] Preceding the edition, both Surius and Gerard Kalckbrenner (of Hamont)[140] present the reasons for translating the works of Ruusbroec in Latin and providing them to new audiences two centuries after they had first been written. Both Surius and Kalckbrenner evaluate the Gerson censure in relation to the earlier translation by Jordaens. They consider Gerson to have been misled by that unreliable translation. Hence there is no reason for the reader to be concerned over the content of Ruusbroec's work. Kalckbrenner and Surius stress different aspects: while Kalckbrenner is more concerned with the historical context and the necessary rebuttal of the Gerson censure, Surius focuses on presenting Ruusbroec's works, both with regard to their content and their order in the edition.

The book opens with a letter by Gerard Kalckbrenner to the prior of Grande-Chartreuse, in which he expounds on, among other things, the motives for this publication. After noting the abundance of available book in his time, he despondently adds:

---

136 Surius' works (and subsequent translations on the basis of those) are listed in Chaix (1981), pp. 635–694.

137 *Margarita Evangelica incomparabilis thesaurus divinae sapientiae, in III Libros divisus . . .* , Cologne, Melchior Novesianus, 1545. Van Schoote (1961) argues against this attribution.

138 *Vita Laurentii Surii ab ipsius quondam amico breviter conscripta* in Laurentius Surius, *De probatis sanctorum vitis* (Cologne 1618), fol. 6r: *Annum 1549 tribuit Ioannis Rusbrochii operibus e Belgico sermone convertendis. Sequenti anno libros V. Christianorum institutionum Florentii Batavi, Carthusiae Lovaniensis Prioris, in Latinam convertit, et anno 52 una cum Rusbrochio edi curavit.* Reference and quotation in Ampe (1975a), p. 398.

139 For an extensive analysis of the objective in a wider context, see Hoenen (2008).

140 Gerard Kalckbrenner (1494, Hamont–1566, Cologne), prior of the Cologne Charterhouse from 1536 until 1566.

> If only it were the case that the vast multitude of books was equal to their usefulness. But now, unfortunately, since far more numerous are those that are not only vain and fruitless, but even pernicious and filled to revile accepted tenets (dogmas), than those aimed at improving the ways of men and having true piety in mind, therefore these times must be called unhappy rather than happy, being times that produce much more weed and venom than good fruits and remedies.[141]

The need to ward off the danger of detrimental books had earlier been the reason to publish the works of Tauler, Kalckbrenner says, and it is the impetus now to present an author who is in no respect inferior, but even superior in many ways: John of Ruusbroec.

Next, Kalckbrenner addresses possible concerns people might have over Ruusbroec, remembering the Gerson censure, the effect of which apparently still lingers on. He puts much of the blame on the earlier translator, Willem Jordaens, whom he leaves unnamed.

> So, with regard to Gerson, first it can be said with certainty that he came across a version or translation that left out many things, and added many things that were never part of the Germanic exemplars; which certainly befitted him little—whoever it was who wanted to act as translator, or rather paraphraser of that book. Who, however, was not satisfied with that, and did not even recoil from placing an introductory letter before the work as if under the name of the author himself, so that whoever found a reading in those three books would be compelled to think that master Johannes Ruusbroec had translated those from the Germanic, and therefore nobody could doubt that whatever this version contained, would entirely be from the author himself, even though, as we said, many things were added here and there, which, even if they are good, are hardly worthy of such man.[142]

---

141 *Atqui o si quam est librorum ingens multitudo, tanta etiam esset & utilitas. Iam vero quando longe plures eduntur nedum vani ac futiles, sed etiam perniciosi, atque execrandis referti dogmatibus, quam qui ad reformandos in melius hominum mores & ad veram pietatem spectent, infelicia potius quam Felicia haec dicenda sunt tempora, ut quae multo plus lolii ac veneni quam bonae frugis ac remedii pariant* (fol. 2r).

142 *Itaque quod ad Gersonem attinet, primo quidem id uerissime dici potest, eum in talem incidisse uersionem siue interpretationem, quae multa omiserit, multa adiecerit, quae nusquam in exemplaribus germanicis habeantur: quod certe parum decuit illum, quisquis tandem fuerit, qui interpretem, uerius paraphrasten, illius libri agere uoluit. Qui tamen nec hic contentus, etiam liminarem operi epistolam tanquam ipsius authoris nomine praefigere*

There can be no doubt, however, that no stain of possible heresy can be found in the original Ruusbroec text. Moreover, Ruusbroec himself was a severe critic in many of his works of the heresies that abounded in his time. That should do, Kalckbrenner says, to put the Gerson censure aside, but additionally one should consider the praise of Dionysius Carthusiensis and of Geert Grote for Ruusbroec as a further sign of approval. And then there is also the work of Henricus Herp (Harphius), which receives such high praise for the knowledge of mystical theology it contains. Were one to subtract from those works the content that was taken from Ruusbroec, Kalckbrenner argues, one would end up with empty books.

In his Letter addressing the reader, Surius is full of praise for Ruusbroec, as can be seen from the opening sentence: 'Here you have, Christian reader, a profound, holy author, taught by God, and who is exceptional to such an extent, that he rightfully ought to be counted among the foremost teachers of the Church.'[143] Surius then describes the content of Ruusbroec's works and explains the order in which they are found in this work. He finally needs to address the Gerson censure. He argues that Gerson was less knowledgeable in mystical theology (following the reasoning of Schoonhoven) and that his criticism can be explained from the bad text that he must have come across. Hence there is no further need to defend Ruusbroec's works, which can very well defend themselves. Whoever reads them will open up an incomparable treasure trove.

Surius was obviously familiar with Jordaens' translation of *Die geestelike brulocht*, but *De ornatu* is so far removed from the kind of translation Surius had in mind that he could hardly use it. He envisaged a literal translation, even though different from Grote's *verbum de verbo* translation. Since *De ornatu* almost never provides a literal translation, there are only a few instances in which Surius' translation resembles *De ornatu*, and in each case it is hard to determine whether the likeness is accidental or a consequence of Surius drawing upon Jordaens.[144]

---

non est ueritus, ut quisquis in illorum trium librorum lectionem inciderit, D. Ioannem Rusbrochium illos e germanico conuertisse sentire cogatur, atque ita quicquid illa habet uersio, totum esse authoris ipsius, non possit quisquam ambigere, cum tamen, ut diximus, multa ibi passim admixta sint, quae ut bona sint, tanto tamen uiro uix digna sunt (fol. 2v).

143 *En habes hic, Christiane Lector, authorem, gravem, sanctum, doctum a Deo, & quidem excellenter, denique talem, ut merito inter praecipuos Ecclesiae Doctores numerandus sit* (fol. a4r).

144 I find Combes' remark disputable: 'Ici, et assez souvent d'ailleurs, Surius s'en tient à la traduction du prédécesseur qu'il décrie, sans restituer la leçon de l'original.' Combes (1945a), p. 595, n. (b). I have checked all instances of textual similarity in Book III that

As a final point, Surius informs the reader on the method he used in establishing the Middle Dutch text to be translated:

> Finally we must warn that in translating we did not always use the same but different copies, that had been brought to us from different places. And this was very useful to us, when we found some particular copy to be less correct. And it is really difficult to find entirely correct copies. No doubt this fact would have presented us with great uncertainties for our translation, if not the ample supply of copies had helped us. (fol. *a 5v)[145]

Surius' translation was read throughout Europe.[146] It is important to note that Surius' text was the basis for the later reception and translation in Spain.[147] In 1696, the Collected Works of Ruusbroec were published in Madrid, translated by Blas López.[148]

Here ends the long trajectory of Ruusbroec's work through the Latin world from the 14th to 17th century, with this last episode still immediately attached to the medieval period. A second cycle of dissemination of the works of Ruusbroec through the world, and this time spanning the globe, started in the 20th century and continues to this day.

---

suggest, according to Combes, that Surius sometimes followed Jordaens' text, and I found the great majority to be very unconvincing.

145 *Denique hoc nobis monendus es, in transferendo non semper iisdem, sed diversis nos usos exemplaribus, ex diversis ad nos locis allatis: idque multum nobis contulit, ubi unum aliquod exemplar minus correctum depraehendimus. Et difficile sane est, omnino correcta reperire exemplaria; neque dubium, quin ea res magnas fuisset et nostrae interpretationi tenebras allatura, nisi nos exemplarium copia adiuvisset* (fol. a5v).

146 An interesting illustration of this fact is MS Marseille, Bibliothèque municipale, 481. This early 17th-century manuscript from the southern France Charterhouse Villa nova contains an excerpt entitled: *Rusbrochius*. The text follows the order of Ruusbroec's works in Surius' edition, with a few excerpts taken from each work, and with exact references to Surius' chapters in a marginal column. Cf. Albanès (1892), pp. 171–172: fols 17v–25v: *Rusbrochius*; fol. 125v: *Pia ac devota et solidissima Rusbrochii precatio*.

147 Mommaers describes the later international influence of Dutch mysticism, partly through the translation of Surius: Mommaers (1995a).

148 Blas López (1696–1698); Behiels (2010), pp. 167–192.

Appendix 1. Manuscripts, Prints, and Editions of Latin Translations of the Works of Jan van Ruusbroec

Opera omnia

Translation: Laurentius Surius.

Date: Translation completed in 1549.[149]

Early Print: *D. Ioannis Rusbrochii summi atque sanctissimi viri, quem insignis quidam theologus alterum Dionysium Areopagitam appellat, opera omnia. Nunc demum post annos ferme ducentos e Brabantiae Germanico idiomate reddita Latine per F. Laurentium Surium. Carthusiae Coloniensis alumnum*, Cologne, Johan Quentel's heirs, 1552.

Later Reprints:

– Cologne, Arnold Quentel, 1608/1609 and Cologne, Johann Wilhelm Friessem, 1692.
– A facsimile of the 1552 edition was published by Gregg Press, Farnborough in 1967.

Edition: The Surius translation is included in the critical edition of the *Opera omnia* of Ruusbroec.

Literature: Ampe (1975a), pp. 398–404; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 241–244, n° 102.

The Little Book of Enlightenment (*Dat boecsken der verclaringhe—Libellus eximius Samuelis titulo, qui alias De alta contemplatione, alias De unione dilecti cum dilecto*)[150]

Translation: anonymous Premonstratensian from Park near Leuven.

Manuscripts: no known extant copies.

Notes:

– Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 4935–43 merely contains a Latin gloss to the *Boecsken der verclaringhe* on fol. 23r.
– The sole reference to this translation is made in Ruusbroec manuscript F: Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1165–67, fol. 7r/v: *Item liber apologeticus siue retractationis loquens de unione amantis cum deo. Incipit*: *De prophete samuel. Iste libellus etiam translatus est in latinum per predictum fratrem premonstratensis de perca* (see edition, Appendix 3 below).

149 See supra 269.

150 These lemmatized titles give the names of the works in English, Middle Dutch, and Latin as used in the critical edition of the *Opera omnia* of Ruusbroec (The Latin titles derive from the *Opera omnia* translation of Laurentius Surius).

Literature: Ampe (1975a), pp. 297, 329–330; Willeumier Schalij (1981), esp. p. 373.

The Seven Enclosures (*Vanden seven sloten—De septem custodiis*)

No known Latin translation.[151]

The Spiritual Espousals (*I*) (*Die geestelike brulocht—De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarium*)

Translation: Willem Jordaens, *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum*.
Date: between *c.*1353 and 1365.[152]
Manuscripts: complete text
- Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 4935–43, Brabant (Herne (Hérinnes-lez-Enghien), Charterhouse Notre-Dame de la Chapelle), XVa; Carthusians.
- Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 11489–91, Brabant (Heverlee near Leuven, Park abbey), XIVd; Premonstratensians.
- Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 1058 (2073) (Italy), composite manuscript, *c.*1400 and XVa.
- Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 526, East Prussia, s. XVa and 1431.
- Douai, Bibliothèque Municipale, 454, Northern France (Marchiennes, Saint-Rictrude and Saint-Peter), XIVd; Benedictines.
- Monte Cassino, Archivio e Biblioteca dell'Abbazia, 597, Italy (Santa Anna in Rocca de Mondragone), shortly before 1400; Benedictines.
- Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 921, France (Paris ?), after 1409–before 1448.
- Subiaco, Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale Santa Scolastica, 202 (198), Italy (Subiaco ?), *c.*1400; Benedictines.
- Subiaco, Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale Santa Scolastica, 219 (216), Italy (Subiaco, Monasterio di Santa Scolastica), 1457; Benedictines.
- Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 5 F 34 (15348), *c.*1500 (fols 1–180) and s. XIVb (fols 181–259), Southern France and Italy.
- Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 1041 (Southern Belgium, Northern France?), shortly after 1410.
- Worcester Cathedral and Chapter Library, F 80, England (Worcester Abbey), XVa; Benedictines.

Manuscripts: excerpts and fragments
- London, British Library, Royal 6 B IX, s. XVa.

151 Apart from the translation by Surius.

152 For the argument for this dating, see Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004), pp. 19–22.

Lost manuscripts:
– Dauphiné, Grande-Chartreuse, France; Carthusians.
– St-Honorat, Les Iles Lérins, France; Benedictines.
Early Print: Iohannis Rusberi, *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum libri tres*, Henricus Stephanus, Paris, 3 August 1512.
Edition: Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004).

The Spiritual Espousals (*II*) (*Die geestelike brulocht—De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarium*)

Translation: Geert Grote, *Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis*.
Date: *c.*1383/1384
Manuscripts: complete text
– Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1610–28, Northern Brabant (Vught, Saint-Sophia), *c.*1500; Carthusians.
– Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 14721–24, Germany (Trier, St Maria), XVc and 1470; Benedictines.
– Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, germ. qu. 1398, Germany (Böddeken, Saint-Meinulphus), 1448; Canons Regular.
– Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, 400, Germany (Wesel, Insel der Himmelskönigin), XVa; Carthusians.
– Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek, 753, Germany (Bad Godesberg, Marienforst), *c.*1460; Brethren of the Common Life.
– Liège, Bibliothèque Publique André Minon, Sect. hist., 6 N 8, Southern Netherlands (Huy, Clairlieu), *c.*1440–1450; Crosier Fathers.
– London, British Library, Royal 6 B. IX, England, XVa.
– Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, I, 156, Germany (Mainz, Saint-Michael), XVa; Carthusians.
– Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, I, 312, Germany (Mainz, Saint-Michael), XVc; Carthusians.
– Princeton, University Library, Garrett 88, Southern Netherlands?, XVc.
– Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 1669/350, Germany (Trier, Saint-Albans), XVd; Carthusians.
– Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1 K 13, Northern Netherlands (Utrecht, Nieuwlicht), XVa; Carthusians.
– Weimar, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik/Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Q. 51, Germany (Erfurt, Salvatorberg), 1489; Carthusians.
Manuscripts: excerpts and fragments
Early Print: not applicable
Edition: Grote, *Ornatus* (2000).

***The Realm of Lovers* (*Dat rijcke der ghelieven—Regnum Deum amantium*)**

No known Latin translation.

***The Spiritual Tabernacle* (*Van den geesteliken tabernakel—In tabernaculum foederis commentaria*)**

Translation: Willem Jordaens.
Manuscripts: no known extant copies.
Literature:
– A Latin translation by Jordaens is mentioned in Miraeus (1622), p. 12; see Ampe (1975a), pp. 330–334; Willeumier Schalij (1981), pp. 351–352; and De Baere (1996a), pp. 143–156. De Baere argues that an excerpt from *The Spiritual Tabernacle* in the manuscript discussed does not stem from the translation of Willem Jordaens.

***The Twelve Beguines* (*Vanden XII beghinen—De vera contemplatione opus praeclarum*)**

No known Latin translation.

***A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness* (*Een spieghel der eeuwigher salicheit—Speculum aeternae salutis*)**

Translation: Geert Grote, *Epistole de sacrosancto sacramento altaris*.
Date: unknown
Manuscripts:
– Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 9320–24, Southern Netherlands (Liège, Saint-Laurence), 1432 and *c*.1450; Benedictines.
– Liège, Bibliothèque Publique André Minon, Sect. hist., 6 M 20, Southern Netherlands (Liège), *c*.1447; Crosier Fathers.
– Liège, Bibliothèque Publique André Minon, Sect. hist., 6 G 26, Southern Netherlands (Liège or Huy), *c*.1450; Crosier Fathers.

Manuscripts, excerpt only:
– Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 921, France (Paris ?), after 1409–before 1448.
– Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek 753, Germany (Bad Godesberg, Marienforst), *c*.1460; Brethren of the Common Life.[153]

Edition: Geerardijn (1952–1954).

153 On the specific characteristics of this excerpt, see p. 251.

Literature: Geerardijn (1954); Willeumier Schalij (1981), p. 364; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 81, nº 30; Ampe (1975b), esp. pp. 155–159; De Baere (1993a); Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), p. xxxix; and van Dijk (2003).
Note: De Baere argues strongly for the validity of the attribution to Geert Grote.

***The Seven Rungs* (*I*) (*Van seven trappen—De septem gradibus*)**
Translation: attributed to Willem Jordaens.
Manuscripts:
– Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, germ. qu. 1398, Germany (Böddeken, Saint-Meinulphus), 1448; Canons Regular.
– Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2603–19, Southern Netherlands (Rooclooster), *c.*1450; Canons Regular.
– Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1610–28, Northern Brabant (Vught, Saint-Sophia), *c.*1500; Carthusians.
Excerpts: Liège, Bibliothèque Publique André Minon, Sect. hist., 6 K 7, Southern Netherlands (Huy, Clairlieu), *c.*1450: Crosier Fathers.
Early Print:
– *D. Ioannis Ruisbroici canonici regularis libelli duo, vere divini. Prior, De septem scalae divini amoris, seu vitae sanctae gradibus. Posterior, De perfectione filiorum Dei*. Nuper inventi, et nunc primum in lucem aediti, Bononiae impraess. Ex officina Vincentii Bonardi Parmensis, et Marci Antonii Carpensis Anno Domini MDXXXVII, mense novembri—ed. N. Bargilesi, Bologna, 1538.
Edition: *Trappen* (1911); Willeumier Schalij (1981), p. 369.
Note: At the time of Müller's edition, the translation was attributed to Geert Grote; the later attribution to Willem Jordaens has not yet been confirmed through an in-depth analysis.
Literature: Kloosterman (1935); Reypens (1950b), pp. 401–408; Ampe (1975a), pp. 306–309; and Willeumier Schalij (1981), p. 369.[154]

***The Seven Rungs* (*II*) (*Van seven trappen—De septem gradibus*)**
Translation: attributed to Geert Grote.
Manuscript, excerpt only: Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek 753, Germany (Bad Godesberg, Marienforst), *c.*1460; Brethren of the Common Life.
Literature: Kloosterman (1935); Reypens (1950b); *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 81, nº 30; Ampe (1975b) and (1975a), pp. 306–309; Grote, *Ornatus* (2000), p. xxxix; and van Dijk (2003), pp. 570–576.

154 The three other manuscripts that Willeumier-Schalij mentions do not contain this translation (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 921; Gdansk, PAN, 1959; Giessen, UB, 753).

Note: In my opinion, the attribution to Geert Grote by Ampe cannot be considered entirely conclusive.

***The Sparkling Stone* (*Vanden blinkenden steen—De calculo, sive de perfectione filiorum Dei*)**

Translation: Willem Jordaens, *De calculo* or *De perfectione filiorum dei*.

Manuscripts:

- Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, germ. qu. 1398, Germany (Böddeken, Saint-Meinulphus), 1448; Canons Regular.
- Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1557–1604, Northern Brabant (Vught, Saint-Sophia), *c.*1500–1510; Carthusians.
- Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 4935–43, Brabant (Herne (Hérinnes-lez-Enghien), Notre-Dame de la Chapelle), 'Xva'; Carthusians.
- Cologne, Historisches Archiv, G.B. Qu. 153, Germany (Cologne, Saint-Crux & Saint-Barbara), *c.*1440; Crosier Fathers.
- Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 526, East Prussia, s. XVa and 1431.
- Cologne, Historisches Archiv, W. 133, Germany (Cologne, Saint-Barbara), *c.*1440; Carthusians.
- Darmstadt, Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek 205, Germany (Niederwerth, Vallendar, Saint-Mary), 1487; Canons Regular.
- Düsseldorf, Universitätsbibliothek, B 155, Germany (Düsseldorf), XV; Crosier Fathers.
- Düsseldorf, Universitätsbibliothek, B 183, Germany (Wezel, Marienfrede), XV: Crosier Fathers.
- Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, 491, Germany (Heilsbronn), XV; Cistercians.
- Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek 753, Germany (Bad Godesberg, Marienforst), *c.*1460; Brethren of the Common Life.
- Liège, Bibliothèque Publique André Minon, Sect. hist., 6 G 26, Southern Netherlands (Huy, Clairlieu), *c.*1450; Crosier Fathers.
- Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, 132, Germany (Mainz, Saint-Michael), XVb/c; Carthusians.
- Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, 168, Germany (Mainz, Saint-Michael), XVc; Carthusians.
- Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, 174, Germany (Mainz, Saint-Michael), XIVd; Carthusians.
- Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 921, France (Paris ?), after 1409–before 1448.
- Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque Municipale, 405, France (Longuenesse), XV; Carthusians.
- Sankt Florian, Augustiner-Chorherren Stift, Codex San-Florianensis XI, 37, Austria, XV; Canons Regular.

– Stonyhurst, Great College, 68, Southern Netherlands (Roermond, Saint-Mary), XVb/c; Carthusians.
– Stratton, Downside Abbey, 48246, Germany (Nürnberg), 1424–1428.
– Trier, Stadtbliothek, 796, Germany (Eberhardsklausen), XV; Canons Regular.
– Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 4493 (Theol. 557), Austria, XV.
– Vienna, Schottenstift 234 (Hübl 178), Austria, *c.*1400
– Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Helmstedt 774.
– Prague, Národní Knihovna České Republiky, 1853 (X. B. 24.), XIVd.
– Prague, Národní Knihovna České Republiky, 687 (IV. E. 7), ex Oybinensi monasterio, XV.
– Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 972, Austria (Seitz), 1436; Carthusians.
– St. Pölten, Diözesanbibliothek, 83, Austria, XVa.
– Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 28299, Germany (Buxheim), XVa; Carthusians.
– Oslo and London, Schøyen Collection, MS 1701, formerly Taunton, Somerset County Record Office, Walker Heneage 3083 (1991 returned to donor, present whereabouts unknown). Now Beinecke.

Excerpts:
– Gdansk, Biblioteka Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1959, Poland (Gdansk, Saint-Peter), XVa.
– Eisleben, Turmbibliothek St Andreae, M 960, Germany (Erfurt), 1461–1487; Carthusians.
– Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, 320, Germany (Mainz), XIV/XV; Carthusians.

Edition: *Steen* (1921)

Early Print: *D. Ioannis Ruisbroici canonici regularis libelli duo, vere divini. Prior, De septem scalae divini amoris, seu vitae sanctae gradibus. Posterior, De perfectione filiorum Dei*. Nuper inventi, et nunc primum in lucem aediti, Bononiae impraess. Ex officina Vincentii Bonardi Parmensis, et Marci Antonii Carpensis Anno Domini MDXXXVII, mense novembri—ed. N. Bargilesi, Bologna, 1538.

Literature: Willeumier Schalij (1981), pp. 337–38.

Note: The translation has been attributed to Willem Jordaens; this attribution has not yet been confirmed by an in-depth analysis and is, in fact, highly questionable.

The Four Temptations (*Vanden vier becoringhen—De quatuor subtilibus tentationibus*)

Translation: attributed to an anonymous Premonstratensian from Park Abbey near Leuven.

Manuscripts:
– Liège, Bibliothèque Publique André Minon, Sect. hist., 6 N 17, Southern Netherlands (Liège), *c.*1440–1460; Crosier Fathers.

Notes:
– The sole reference to a translation by a Premonstratensian is made in Ruusbroec manuscript F: Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1165–67, fol. 7: *Item liber de quatuor temptacionibus. Incipit*: *Die ooren heeft te hoorne. Hunc librum transtulit in latinum quidam frater de perca prope louanium ordinis premonstratensis* (see edition, Appendix 3 below).
– The attribution of this translation to the Premonstratensian is made by Jan Deschamps (*Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 222).
– Dykmans suggests that Simon Wevel, brother of Godfried Wevel, might be the author of the translation.

Literature: Dykmans (1940), p. 329, n. 1; *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 130 and 222–223; Ampe (1975a), pp. 297–298, 329–330; and Willeumier Schalij (1981), pp. 341–342.

***The Christian Faith* (*Vanden kerstenen ghelove—De fide et iudicio*)**

No known Latin translation.

***Letters* (*Brieven—Epistolae*)**

No known Latin translation.

Appendix 2. Summary Table of the Ruusbroec Translations

Work[155]	Title of Translation	Translator	Date
Complete Works	*D. Ioannis Rusbrochii summi atque sanctissimi viri, quem insignis quidam theologus alterum Dionysium Areopagitam appellat, opera omnia.*	Laurentius Surius	1552
The Little Book of Enlightenment	?	anonymous Premonstratensian	?
The Seven Enclosures	—	—	—
The Spiritual Espousals	*De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarium*	Willem Jordaens	between *c.*1353 and 1365
	Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis	Geert Grote	*c.*1383/1384
The Realm of Lovers	—	—	—
The Spiritual Tabernacle	?	Willem Jordaens	?
The Twelve Beguines	—	—	—
A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness	?	Geert Grote	?
The Seven Rungs	Incipit: *Postulemus a domino*	Willem Jordaens	?
	?	Geert Grote?	?
The Sparkling Stone	*De calculo, sive de perfectione filiorum Dei*	(Willem Jordaens)?	?
The Four Temptations	?	anonymous Premonstratensian	?
The Christian Faith	—	—	—
Letters	—	—	—

155 For the sake of clarity, this table does not include Surius' translations of Ruusbroec's individual texts.

Appendix 3. Tables of Contents in Manuscripts A and F

MS. A: Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, 19295–97, fol. 1v

¶ In isto volu*min*e co*n*tinentur subscripti libri quos edidit in vulga*r*i ydeomate vir devot*us* et inte*r*nus d*omin*us ac p*ate*r vene*r*abilis frate*r* ioh*ann*es ruysbroec primus prior monasterii viridisvallis

.1. Primo. Lib*er* de sp*iritu*ali tabernaculo. q*ui* sic incipit. Loept alsoe dat ghij begrijpe*n* moeght Hunc libru*m* edidit d*omin*us Ioh*ann*es ruysbroeck pro magna p*ar*te adhuc presbi*ter* sec*u*laris ex*ist*ens Residuum a*utem* post ingressu*m* religio*n*is co*m*plevit. Et est translat*us* in latinu*m* per f*rat*rem wilhelmu*m* iordani presbiteru*m* professu*m* in mo*n*asterio viridisvallis

.2. Item. Lib*er* qui intitulatur Specul*um* salutis eterne Incipit sic. Dit boeck mach wel een spieghel wesen. Hu*n*c libru*m* edidit ide*m* d*omin*us ioh*ann*es p*ost* ingressu*m* religionis

.3. Item. Liber de .vij. gradibus sp*irit*ualis amoris Incipit. Gracie en*de* de heyleghe vreese Hunc libru*m* edidit ide*m* d*omin*us ioh*ann*es p*ost* ingressu*m* religio*n*is. Et est translat*us* in latinu*m* p*er* devotu*m* viru*m* magistru*m* gherardu*m* groot.

APPENDIX 3 (cont.)

MS. F: Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, 1165–67, fol. 7r/v

[7r]

¶ In isto volu*m*i*n*e co*n*tinentur libri subscripti quos edidit in vulgari ydeomate vir devotus et intern*us*. d*omin*us ac p*at*er venerabilis Frater Iohan*n*es Ruysbroec prim*us* prior monasterii viridisvallis.

1 ¶ Prim*us* liber qui intitulatur. Regnu*m* amanti*um* vel amoroso*rum* Et in theutonico dicit*ur*. Dat rijcke der gheliev*en* Incipit sic Die heere hevet wederleydet. ¶ Hu*n*c lib*rum* edidit d*omin*us Iohan*n*es ruysb*roec* adhuc presbiter secularis existens.

2 ¶ Item liber de nuptiis. Incipit sic Siet de brudego*m* comt. ¶ Hunc lib*rum* edidit id*em* d*omin*us Iohan*n*es post ingressu*m* religionis. qui etiam e*st* translat*us* in latinu*m* p*er* fra*t*re*m* Wilhelmum jordani p*res*b*iteru*m. professum in monasterio viridisvallis.

3 ¶ Item liber de calculo. q*ui* alias dicitur de perfecione[1] filio*rum* Incipit. Die men*s*ce die leve*n* wilt. ¶ Hu*n*c lib*rum* edidit id*em* d*omin*us Iohannes ad*huc* manen*s* in s*ecu*lo p*res*b*it*er secular*is* existens. qui etia*m* translatus est in latinu*m* per eu*nde*m fra*t*rem Wilhelmu*m* iordani predictu*m*.

¶ Item liber de quatuor temptacionibus. Incipit Die ooren heeft te hoorne. Hunc lib*rum* transtulit in latinu*m* quidam[2] f*rat*er de perca prope lovaniu*m* ordinis Premonstratensis. 4

¶ Item liber de fide Incipit. Soe wie behoude*n* wilt zyn. ¶ Hunc lib*rum* edidit id*em* d*omin*us Iho*ann*es ad*huc* manen*s* i*n* sec*u*lo p*res*b*it*er secularis. 5

¶ Item liber de .vij. seris in quo docet et instruit norma*m* et ordine*m* bone et religi<o>se vite. ¶ Hu*n*c lib*rum* scripsit id*em* d*omin*us Io*ann*es cuida*m* s*anct*imo*n*iali i*n* mo*nas*terio[3] s*anct*e clare bruxelle Et sic Incipit. Lieve zuster bove*n* alle dinc 6

¶ Item liber apologeticus sive retrac<ta>tionis[4] loquens de unione ama*nt*i*s* a*nim*e cu*m* deo. Incipit De prophet<e>[5] samuel. Iste libellus etiam translatus est. in latinum p*er* p*redict*um 7

---

1 *sic*.

2 MS: *quidem*.

3 Two letters blotted out between *monaste* and *rio*.

4 *-ta* added above the line in a later hand.

5 *-e* added behind the word in a smaller, later script.

[7r]

frat*rem* premonstratensis de
perca

8 ¶ Item liber de .xij. beghinis[6]
tractans[7] de duplici vita ho-
minis. contemplativa
videlicet et activa. Incipit
Het saten .xij. beghinen.
Hunc lib*rum* edidit ide*m* d*omi*nu*s*
Iohan*n*es post ingressum
religionis.

¶ De hoc s*anct*o viro d*omi*no ac pa*t*re
beverendissi*m*o f*rat*re Iho*ann*e ruys-
broec. primo priore[8]
monasterii viridisvall*is* cui*us*
sunt opuscula p*re*scripta. sic[9]
refert dyonisius rikel carthu-
sien*sis*[10] in libro de donis s*anct*i sp*irit*u*s*
Capitulo intitulato.

¶ Confi<r>matio[11] o*mniu*m pred*ictorum*
ex d*ict*is doctoris divini.[12] Cui*us*
tenor sequitur in hec verba
et sic incipit.

Vir aut*em* mirabilis d*omi*nu*s* Io-
hannes ruysbroec que*m* qua-
liter apellem ignoro nisi ut
q*uem*admodu*m* venerabilis ille
hugo de s*anct*o victore propte*r* emi-
nente*m* sua*m* sc*ient*ia*m* vocat*us* est alt*er*
agustin*us*[13] sic Iohannes iste mira-
bilis propter excellentissima*m*
sua*m* sapientia*m* nominatur alt*er*
dionysius. Puto eni*m* q*uod* si libri
ei*us* in t*a*li ess*e*nt stilo translati ut
libri magni dyonisii. no*n* ess*e*nt
faciliores studenti q*uam*[14] libri dyo-
nisii. Q*uoni*am igitur vir hic tan*te*
sapientie fuit merito eum ap-
pello doctore*m* divinu*m* q*uia*[15] instruc-
tore*m* no*n* habuit nisi sp*irit*um s*anct*um.
Erat enim alias ydeota eo utiq*ue*
modo quo petrus et Iohannes
archi ap*ost*oli a luca in actibus
ap*ost*olo*rum* illitterati fuisse narran-
tur. Unde et libros suos i*n* vul-
gari scripsit ydeomate. quo*rum*
tame*n* profunditate*m* at*que* sente*n*tia*m*
nemo ad plenu*m* mirari iam
valet. Q*uoni*am itaq*ue* certus su*m*
viru*m* istu*m* a sp*irit*u s*anct*o instructu*m*.
Propterea magna est apud
me ei*us* auctoritas. et que de
donis sp*irit*us s*anct*i[16] scripsit. etc.
studiose inspexi.[17] ¶ Hec ille.

¶ Sequitur lib*er* qui dicit*ur*
Regnu*m* aman*t*iu*m* vel amorosor*um*.

---

6 *beghinis*: MS. *beghins*.
7 The *-c* was inserted above the line, possibly by the scribe.
8 *huius* erased after *priore*.
9 MS. sit.
10 Dionysius Carthusianus (Dionysius of Leuven, Dionysius of Rijkel, Dionysius of Roermond) (1402/1403, Rijkel–1471, Roermond).
11 *-r* added above the line in a smaller, later script.
12 *Confirmatio–divini*] The title of Article 13 in *De donis spiritus sancti*, Tractatus, 2. Denis wrote this treatise in 1430. Edition: *Doctoris ecstatici D. Dionysii opera Omnia*, cura monachorum sacri ordinis Cartusiensis, 42 in 44 vols (Montreuil, Tournai, Parkminster, 1896–1913, 1935), vol. 35, *quando*, p. 184. Emery (1991), p. 233, notes that this excerpt is the only manuscript witness of this text.
13 *Sic*.
14 *quam*: the scribe uses the abbreviation for *quod*.
15 MS. *quem*.
16 *scrip* was blotted out between *sancti* and *scripsit*.
17 *Vir – inspexi*] quoted from *De donis spiritus sancti*, 2, art. 13.

Ruusbroec's Influence until *c.*1800

Jos Andriessen

The after-effects and influence of Ruusbroec's thought in later centuries was not limited to the circulation of his works in manuscript and print.* In addition to these, one must consider both his direct and indirect influence upon later thinkers, as well as the attention and interest devoted to his life and teachings. This contribution will briefly treat these aspects of later Ruusbroec scholarship. We must first mention, however, that there continues to be a great need for general and thorough preliminary research in this area, despite the numerous detailed studies we have at our disposal concerning particular figures or works. As it is impossible to refer all the information in this overview to available bibliographies, we will mention only a few reference works.

Groenendaal

It is self-evident that Ruusbroec's life and work were primarily a source of inspiration to his fellow brothers at Groenendaal. Worthy of most particular note in this regard are Jan van Leeuwen (†1378), the 'good cook' who wrote many treatises containing numerous references to Ruusbroec's thought; Willem Jordaens (†1372), who received a university education and translated a number of Ruusbroec's works into Latin but who was also the author of original mystical treatises in Middle Dutch; Godfried van Wevel (†1396), whose treatise *The Twelve Virtues* (*Vanden twaelf dogheden*), in which Eckhart's influence is clearly discernible, was attributed to Ruusbroec for approximately five centuries; and Jan van Schoonhoven (†1432), who, after he entered the community at Groenendaal, lived with Ruusbroec for some years and who, in an impressive rebuttal written *c.*1405, defended Ruusbroec against the condemnation pronounced by Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris. Ruusbroec continued to be the pride of the priory for later generations of canons: the codices of his works were preserved with great care, and in about 1420, Henricus Pomerius (†1469) wrote a biography of Ruusbroec. Unfortunately, Pomerius

* Editors' note: This article first appeared in Dutch in *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 263–276. See the introduction to this volume. This should be kept in mind when the article refers to 'recent research.' This article was translated from the Dutch by John Arblaster.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_011



ILLUSTRATION 1 *Groenendaal in the 17th Century* (*formerly attributed to Jan or Pieter Breughel*)

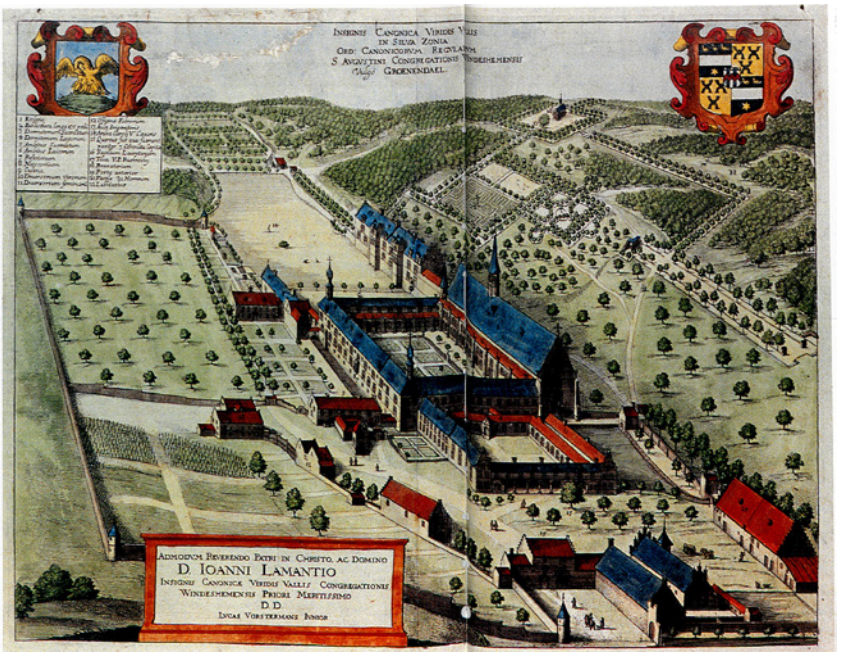


ILLUSTRATION 2 *Groenendaal in the 17th Century* (*based on an earlier engraving*)

slipped into a hagiographical genre in this biography, causing great complications regarding the assessment of the 'real' Ruusbroec in later years.

Manuscript Circulation

The fact that even during his own lifetime, Ruusbroec's writings were received with great interest and appreciation outside Groenendaal, and even outside the Duchy of Brabant, is evidenced by the presence of manuscripts of his works in Germany, Italy, France, and England by approximately 1400. We also know that in Germany, extensive fragments of *The Spiritual Espousals* were brought together to form an independent compilation and that an abridged version of the treatise *The Four Temptations* was circulated there. In England, fragments of *Espousals* were integrated into another work. As early as the 14th century, quotes from *Espousals* were included in a work by the German Franciscan Marquard von Lindau (†1392), and at the beginning of the 15th century, the Benedictine abbot Johannes von Kastl quoted from copies of *Espousals* and *The Sparkling Stone* in his treatise *De adhaerendo Deo*. Familiarity with Ruusbroec's work is also evident from the objections concerning a number of doctrines in *Espousals*, raised by Heinrich von Hessen von Langenstein in 1384, and of course also from the condemnation of the third book of *Espousals* by the Chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson, *c.*1400.

Windesheim

The Carthusians and the Congregation of Windesheim appear to have played a particularly active role in the rapid and wide circulation of manuscripts, to say nothing of the contributions of other monastic orders. Concerning Windesheim, this is certainly not surprising, considering that Groenendaal joined the congregation in 1412, along with a number of other priories in Brabant. Moreover, Geert Grote, who founded the Modern Devotion—the religious movement from which Windesheim emerged—had himself been an ardent admirer of Ruusbroec and his doctrine of the 'common life.' Grote had visited Ruusbroec at Groenendaal and translated a number of his treatises into Latin. And yet, due to Grote's character and intent, he emphasized asceticism and practice more than mystical contemplation in the spiritual life. Consequently, many of his followers in the Modern Devotion focused on a well-ordered method of prayer rather than contemplation as such. Despite this general tendency, however, Ruusbroec's writings were held in high esteem at many of the almost one

hundred monasteries the congregation numbered by the end of the 15th century. Moreover, his influence on several of the authors of the Modern Devotion is very clear: Gerlach Peters (†1411) defended Ruusbroec's mystical theology in his *Soliloquium*, and Hendrik Mande (†1431) adopted numerous excerpts from Ruusbroec's works almost verbatim. The spiritual writings of Alijt Bake (†1465), prioress of the Galilee Convent in Ghent, illustrate her familiarity with the work of Ruusbroec and other mystical authors. There are even several texts reminiscent of Ruusbroec's thought in the works of Thomas a Kempis (†1471), whose numerous writings are the pre-eminent expressions of the spirit of the Modern Devotion.

Carthusians

The important role the Carthusian Order played in the circulation of Ruusbroec's works can probably best be explained by their spiritual affinity. The Carthusians of Herne—who had Ruusbroec's earliest writings in their possession and had the pleasure of welcoming him to their monastery for three days—were among the very first to initiate direct contact with him. Ruusbroec also maintained friendly relations with the Carthusians of Cologne from relatively early on, as is apparent from an official document drawn up by the prior-general in 1371. It was primarily thanks to the Carthusians that Ruusbroec's writings became known in England, France, and Italy. This close association explains why it was occasionally thought that Ruusbroec himself was a Carthusian. The first time his name appeared in a printed work was probably in 1474, in a book by the Carthusian Rolevinck. The great appreciation for Ruusbroec's spiritual teaching expressed in the often-read works of Dionysius the Carthusian (†1471) was approvingly adopted by later authors, and in 1552, the Carthusians of Cologne made Ruusbroec's works accessible across all borders through their Latin translation and publication of his complete oeuvre.

Hendrik Herp

Hendrik Herp (†1477) occupies an exceptional place in the overview of Ruusbroec's influence. Herp, who transferred from the Modern Devotion to the Franciscan Order, contributed more to the dissemination and circulation of Ruusbroec's teaching than even Dionysius the Carthusian. When, in the 20th century, he was referred to as 'Ruusbroec's herald,' this must not be understood to mean that he simply reproduced Ruusbroec's thought in his own writings

and that they contain practically no personal contributions (as the Carthusian Kalckbrenner posited in the 16th century and others later repeated). Herp undoubtedly appropriated Ruusbroec's positions, especially in his *Mirror of Perfection* (*Spieghel der volcomenheit*) and his *Eden contemplativorum*, often borrowing words and sentences verbatim from Ruusbroec and ordering them into a systematic whole, but he also integrated insights found elsewhere, added his own reflections, and struck a more affective tone in his expositions. His works and method were apparently particularly well received, as in the 16th and 17th centuries he was considered to be among the great mystical authors. Along with Ruusbroec and Tauler, he formed the famous and much-quoted triumvirate. Most probably, Herp and Tauler found a larger readership than Ruusbroec in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and France (one thinks here especially of the *Institutiones Taulerianae*), though in this regard one must consider that a substantial portion of the works circulated under their names were fundamentally inspired by Ruusbroec.

Women's Convents and Beguinages

The many women's convents and beguinages in the Low Countries proved to be a particularly receptive environment for Ruusbroec's influence. His works were not only diligently read but also fostered a spiritual climate that facilitated the development of an intense prayer life. The best known witnesses of this development in the first half of the 16th century are Maria van Hout, a member of the beguine community in Oisterwijk, and the anonymous authoress (Reinalda van Eymeren at Arnhem, according to one hypothesis) of *The Evangelical Pearl* (*De evangelische peerle*) and *The Temple of Our Soul* (*Den tempel onser sielen*). They committed their spiritual experiences and reflections to writing in letters and testimonies that were first circulated in manuscript form but were later published in print through the mediation of the Cologne Carthusians. Thanks to translations into Latin, French, and German, the *Pearl* became well known in various countries, particularly in France and the German Empire in the 17th century. These writings, which presuppose a thorough knowledge of extensive spiritual literature—this is especially true of the authoress of the *Pearl*—almost never mention Ruusbroec's name explicitly. Many words and sentences, however, clearly demonstrate their profound relationship with the central themes of Ruusbroec's mystical thought. The beguine spiritual director Nicolaus Eschius (†1578), who was closely connected to this milieu and the spiritual climate fostered within it, became well known in vari-

ous communities due, among other things, to his *Exercitia theologiae mysticae*, which was frequently reprinted.

The Laity

The fact that Ruusbroec was also received with interest and readership among the laity is evidenced from the example of the Bruges-based rhetorician Anthonis de Roovere (†1482), who found the inspiration for his *In Praise of the Blessed Sacrament* (*Lof vanden heyligen Sacramente*) in Ruusbroec's *Mirror of Eternal Blessedness* and transposed various passages from it into verse.[1] The extent to which Ruusbroec's texts were a source of inspiration to certain artists in the late Middle Ages, as is sometimes supposed, is an extremely delicate and difficult question to answer.[2]

Cologne Carthusians

It may seem remarkable that most of the primary ways Ruusbroec's influence was spread in the first century and a half after his death came together in the first half of the 16th century in Cologne, and more specifically at the Cologne Charterhouse. This was not the result of a random coincidence. Rather, it occurred through a determined and well-considered action plan of several Carthusians in Cologne: Petrus Blomevenna (†1536), Dirk Loer (†1554) and his brother Bruno (†1557), Gerard Kalckbrenner (†1566)—who were all from the Low Countries—and their confreres Johannes Justus Lanspergius (†1539) and Laurentius Surius (†1578). Each to the extent of his ability, and occasionally assisted by collaborators such as the aforementioned Nicolaus Eschius and the young Petrus Canisius (†1597), they ensured that the works of Herp and Dionysius the Carthusian, of Maria van Hout and the authoress of the *Pearl*, the Tauler compilation and Ruusbroec's works—to name but a few—were printed and circulated widely. Thanks to these translators, publishers, and compilers, new European (and even further afield!) audiences were found for the mysticism of the Low Countries and the Rhineland in the 16th century. Henceforth, general epithets would be bestowed upon these writers, characterizing them as

1 See Van Eeghem (1953).

2 Editors' note: An article has recently been published on this topic in *Ons Geestelijk Erf*. See Bekaert (2011).

one whole: 'les mystiques du Nord,' 'les rhéno-flamands,' the German mystics, 'la mistica reno-fiamminga,' 'los místicos del Norte,' and others. This terminology as such complicates research into the influence of the various authors of the 16th and 17th centuries, but the fact that Herp, the *Pearl*, and the *Institutiones Taulerianae* were—to a greater or lesser extent—dependent on Ruusbroec's work is a serious obstacle in determining the extent of each author's sphere of influence. In very many cases, Ruusbroec's influence as a source of inspiration must be presumed, even those in which he is not mentioned explicitly.

Ludovicus Blosius

For the sake of comprehensiveness, we must also mention the Benedictine abbot Ludovicus Blosius (†1566) in the context of the mysticism of the North. In some of his works, Blosius expresses his admiration for Ruusbroec, Tauler, and Herp and borrows many of their texts. As his works were circulated particularly widely in Catholic countries until the 18th century and even later, they ensured the continued, albeit modest, existence of a mystical tradition despite the unfavorable climate of the Rationalist age.

Italy

As to the influence of Northern mysticism—and more particularly that of Ruusbroec—in Italy, we are still faced with unanswered questions. We do know, however, that three treatises appeared in print there relatively early (in 1538 and 1565), but their further influence and development is unknown. It is certain that the Italians were familiar with Ruusbroec, as his name appears—albeit occasionally with incorrect biographical details—in various bibliographical works: in 1566 in the work of the Dominican Sixtus Senensis, in 1591 in the work of Thomas Bozius, and in 1613 in the work of Silvestro Maruli. Robert Bellarmine was better informed, as is evident from his description in *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* (1613), as was Gabriël Pennotto, of course, who as procurator-general promoted the cause of Ruusbroec's beatification in Rome in 1622 and the following years.

The fact that Herp had become more famous in Italy is undisputed; his *Mirror of Perfection* (which, in fact, was largely dependent on Ruusbroec) was translated and reprinted numerous times starting in 1522. The influence of his work is evident in the writings of the Capuchin Giovanni da Fano (†1539), the Franciscans Bartolomeo di Castello (†1535), and Bartolomeo da Salutio

(†1617). His work was read and recommended at monasteries. On 21 March 1575, Everard Mercurian, Superior General of the Jesuit Order (†1580), decreed that Herp, Ruusbroec, Tauler, and a number of other mystical writers be placed on a list of authors that members of the Jesuit Order were not permitted to read.[3] Objections to certain expressions and terms in Herp's work were raised in Rome, resulting in an emended edition published there in 1586, in which the term *superessentialis* was replaced by *supereminens*, among a number of other changes. The revised edition contained a laudatory introduction by the emendator.

The influence of the mysticism of the North is also to be found in the *Breve compendio*, which was published at Brescia in 1611 but which had already been published in French translation at the end of the 16th century and was widely circulated. A similar influence appears to be present in the *Essercitii spirituali* by the Jesuit Giuseppe Blondo (†1598), and this is likewise the case for the Italian Quietism that was propagated especially by P.M. Petrucci (†1701) at the end of the 17th century.[4] All the points raised here undoubtedly require further research.

Spain

With respect to Spain and Portugal, we are also faced with unanswered questions, though not so much due to the lack of preliminary research as because of the wealth of this research and the multiplicity of interpretations. Over the past sixty years[5] especially, numerous researchers from various countries—and in various languages—have treated the problem of whether and to what extent the mysticism of the North influenced the spiritual authors of Spain's Golden Age.[6] The first question this raised was whether and to what extent the mystical authors of the North were known in the Iberian Peninsula. The findings published by P. Groult in 1927 as well as the later additions, published both by Groult and others, laid relatively reliable foundations for further research. One of the primary reasons this research has encountered great difficulties is the severe action taken by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities in the 16th century against anything that seemed remotely unusual or heretical.

3 See de Leturia (1957).

4 See Petrocchi (1978) and Cognet (1966).

5 Editors' note: We remind the reader that this article was originally published in 1981 and here refers to the period between 1920 and 1980.

6 See Orcibal (1966) and Andrés Martin (1975).

This resulted in a climate of suspicion and led to persecution, including with regard to the reading and circulation of mystical literature. The reticence of spiritual authors to acknowledge their sources and the origin of their terminology is entirely understandable from this perspective. Consequently, we must largely rely on comparative textual analysis, which must always, even in the case of clear parallels and similarities, consider the possible dependence on older sources (such as, for example, Dionysius the Areopagite, Hugo of Balma, or Richard of Saint-Victor). Nevertheless, given the current state of research, we can safely assume that the mystics of the North did indeed influence 16th-century Spanish writers. In approximately 1500, there was a first, cursory acquaintance with a number of works of a primarily ascetic nature, mediated especially by the Benedictine Abbot Garcia de Cisneros (†1510). From *c.*1530, however, there was a great breakthrough of Herp's works. The influence of his work can be discerned in *Tercer abecedario* by the Franciscan Francisco de Osuna (†1540), but even more so in the second edition of the *Subida del monte Sion* by his confrere Bernardino de Laredo (†1540). It is also evident in later works by various other writers such as Juan de Avila (†1569), Luis de Granada (†1588), Luis de León (†1591), and Antonio Cordeses (†1601). In addition to Herp, Tauler was known soon after, especially thanks to the *Institutiones Taulerianae*. Ruusbroec and Blosius also became known, but concrete details concerning their influence are more scarce. It is highly probable that Teresa of Avila (†1582) became familiar with the mysticism of the North, if not directly then certainly indirectly, through Osuna and Laredo. John of the Cross (†1591) undoubtedly became acquainted with Ruusbroec, Tauler, and Herp directly from their works, in which he found themes that he treated in his own ingenious manner. When, at the end of the 16th century, the highpoint of the authorities' anti-mystical movement had passed, the reticence of writers to acknowledge their sources gradually waned. This is very clear in the work of the Franciscan Juan de los Angeles (†1609), for example, who quoted and praised Tauler and Blosius but especially Herp and 'el divino Rusbrochio' abundantly, without, however, always understanding their most profound meaning. The northern influence is also evident in the works of the Carmelites Miguel de la Fuente (†1625) and José de Jesús María Quiroga (†1628).

In this altered climate of the 17th century, extensive treatises on mystical theology and the life of prayer soon appeared. The authors of these works, Carmelites such as Tomás de Jesús (Thomas a Jesu, †1627) and Juan de Jesús María (†1615), Jesuits such as Luis de la Puente (†1624) and Diego Alvarez de Paz (†1620), and the Capuchin Isidoro de León (†1687?), brought scholastic theology and the (somewhat mitigated) terminology of northern mysticism together in a synthesized overview, and in doing so expressed their high esteem

for Ruusbroec, Herp, Tauler, and others. Of particular note is the fact that an edition of Ruusbroec's complete works was published in Spanish translation in Madrid between 1696 and 1698.

Portugal

In comparison to Spain, the Inquisition in 16th-century Portugal was far milder in its treatment of mystical literature. It was even thanks to the Cardinal Infant, who bore the responsibility for it, that Herp's work and the *Institutiones Taulerianae* were circulated relatively early. Their influence is evident in the works of spiritual writers such as the Capuchin Francisco de Sousa Tavares (†1570?) and Gaspar de Leâo (†1576). Ruusbroec and Blosius appear to have become known soon after. Eschius was held in particularly high esteem. This is probably related to the fact that Portuguese thought developed in a more affective and ascetic direction.[7]

France

In France, Ruusbroec's *Espousals* incited the condemnation of the authoritative Gerson in approximately 1400, and one century later, the first edition of the same work was published at Paris thanks to the equally authoritative Lefèvre d'Etaples. It is unknown to what extent these two events had concrete influence, though the fact that Bossuet appealed to Gerson's condemnation when he condescendingly rejected Ruusbroec's theology in 1697 leads us to assume that the judgment of the chancellor of the University of Paris remained well known. Another unanswered question is the extent to which the presence and work of Johannes Mauburnus (†1501) and Johannes Standonck (†1504), representatives of the Modern Devotion in France, contributed to greater familiarity with Ruusbroec and the mysticism of the North. It is certain, however, that a great many of the books circulated and read in France between 1550 and 1610 were written by authors from the Low Countries and the Rhineland. The mystics of the North had a particularly profound influence in the period between 1580 and 1620, the age of 'l'invasion mystique,' and their writings, in addition to a number of others from Italy and Spain, were the primary inspiration for the remarkable flowering of French spirituality in the 17th century.[8]

7 See Ricard (1963) and da Silva Dias (1960).

8 See Cognet (1966), pp. 231–495; Rayez (1963); Massaut (1963).

Of the northern mystics, the works of Herp and Tauler (yet again, especially the *Institutiones*) were circulated earliest and were most influential in France, as in other Latin countries. France's interest in the *Pearl* was particularly remarkable, as was the enduring popularity of the repeatedly reprinted works of Blosius. The works of Dionysius the Carthusian also met with great approval. To the extent that these authors were indebted to Ruusbroec's thought, they also spread his influence indirectly. Often, moreover, a direct influence through personal contact with his works is also evident.

The Carthusians and the Capuchins were the primary mediators of the mysticism of the North. Dom Richard Beaucousin (†1610), who in the late 16th century led the circle that had formed around Madame Acarie from the Carthusian monastery of Vauvert in Paris, was an ardent admirer of this mysticism and published his own French translation of *The Evangelical Pearl* in 1602 and Ruusbroec's *Espousals* in 1606. Benedict of Canfield (†1610), an Englishman who had converted to Catholicism and become a Capuchin, was also a member of this circle. His most important work, *Règle de perfection*, was circulated widely, first in manuscripts and later in many printed editions and translations. Thanks to the much-discussed third part of the book, it became one of the most influential treatises of French spirituality. The writings of the mystics of the North are the first among the numerous sources from which the author drew his inspiration: Herp, Tauler, the *Pearl*, and probably also directly from Ruusbroec.[9] Pierre de Bérulle (†1629), another leading figure of French spirituality, was also influenced by the mystics of the North through the mediation of Beaucousin. He was already familiar with Herp when he published his rewritten French edition of the *Breve compendio* in 1597, when he was only 22. Furthermore, in his later development to a piety that was centered more on Christ's humanity, there are certain statements in which we can discern an enduring affinity with ideas from the *Pearl* or Ruusbroec. Even the spiritual teaching of Francis de Sales (†1622), who rejected the speculative reflections of northern mysticism for being too subtle or too dark, was unable to escape the influence of the *Pearl* or Herp completely.[10]

The profound influence of northern mysticism, and more particularly of Ruusbroec, is also to be found in the works of one of the most notable spiritual authors of the age, the blind Carmelite of the so-called Reform of Touraine, Jean de Saint-Samson (†1636). There are, of course, many other writers who were familiar with the mystics of the North. It suffices to name but a few of

9 See Mommaers (1971–1972) and (1972–1973).

10 See Daniels (1932), pp. 44–69, 177.

them here: the Capuchins Laurent de Paris (†1631)[11] and Joseph du Tremblay (†1638); the Bishop of Belley J.-P. Camus (†1652); the Jesuits Louis Lallemant (†1635), Jean-Baptiste de Saint-Jure (†1657), and Jean-Joseph Surin (†1665); Thomas Deschamps and Claudine Moine (early and mid-17th century respectively), about whom we have very little biographical information; the Ursuline Marie de l'Incarnation (†1672); and, undoubtedly, also Madame Guyon (†1717).

The Protestant Pierre Poiret (†1719) was a great admirer of the latter. He moved from France and settled in Rijnsburg near Leiden. His numerous publications and editions raised the interest of many in mysticism and mystical works by Ruusbroec (whom he praised very highly), Herp, Gerlach Peters, and the authoress of the *Pearl*. His influence spread not only to Pietist circles in Germany but even as far as marginalized religious groups in 18th-century England.

The Holy Roman Empire

That there was sustained interest in Ruusbroec in the empire is apparent from fact that the Surius edition of 1552 was reprinted in 1608–1609 and 1692, from the German translation of his complete works in 1702, reprinted in 1727, and from individual editions of certain works. Ruusbroec's influence is clear in the *Summa practica theologiae mysticae* by the Capuchin Victor Gelen (†1669), who, moreover, had connections to the Low Countries. A figure of even greater importance in this respect, however, was the Jesuit Maximilianus Sandaeus (†1656), who was originally from Amsterdam but worked in Würzburg, Mainz, and Cologne. A number of his many publications treat mystical theology. Of particular note is his *Pro theologia mystica clavis*, an alphabetized dictionary of mystical terminology containing numerous references and quotations. It is evident from this book that its author was very familiar with the works of Ruusbroec, Herp, Tauler, and Blosius.

There was also notable interest in Ruusbroec in certain Protestant circles. Daniel Sudermann (†1631) and Gottfried Arnold (†1714) made significant contributions to the circulation of Ruusbroec's works. Arnold was particularly interested in anything that had been the subject of controversy throughout the history of the Church. He frequently referenced Ruusbroec in his publications, inspired by the aforementioned French Huguenot Pierre Poiret. Many representatives of German Pietism, such as Gerhard Tersteegen (†1769), also

11 See Dubois-Quinard (1959).

owe their familiarity with numerous mystical works from the Low Countries and France to Poiret.

Johann Scheffler, who was raised a Protestant and is known in the history of German literature as Angelus Silesius (†1677), is of particular note. Even before his conversion to Catholicism in 1653, he had studied Sandaeus' *Clavis* thoroughly and immersed himself in the spiritual works of Herp, Blosius, and others, but especially Ruusbroec. His *Cherubic Wanderer* (*Cherubinischer Wandersmann*), published in 1657, was the result of this close study.

Regarding Ruusbroec's influence, the following people are also notable: Theophilus Spizelius, who applauded his work in 1685; Paulus Freherus, who accorded him a position among the learned theologians in 1688; Johannes Antonius Fabricius, who compiled a reliable synthesis of available bibliographic details in 1734; and Johann Lorenz Mosheim (†1755), whose *De beghardis et beguinabus*, published posthumously, attempted to use available sources to acquire sound insight into Ruusbroec's thought.

England

It would appear that the events of the 16th century resulted in an interruption in interest in Ruusbroec in England, where he had become known very early. In the 17th century, a new, albeit very modest, reintroduction occurred from France or the Southern Low Countries, where communities of English exiles had formed. The English translation of Benedict of Canfield's *Règle de perfection*, the posthumously published book *Sancta Sophia* by the Benedictine Augustine Baker (†1641), and other works were met with interest by Catholic readers, but also by some Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Quakers in England and Scotland. Furthermore, marginal religious groups and nonconformists were also introduced to mystical literature in the late 17th century, via Poiret and German Pietists. This occasionally resulted in the collection of extensive private libraries.[12]

The Low Countries

Until approximately 1930, scholars maintained that—despite a few exceptions—Ruusbroec's mysticism had relatively little influence in the Low Countries before the end of the 15th century and that in the following centuries, there

12 See Owen (1964); Spearritt (1974); Birrell (1976).


Ecce Sponsus venit.
BEATVS HOMO, QVEM TV ERVDIERIS DOMINE.
B. IOANNES RVSBROCKIVS Canonicorum Reg. in Viridi Valle prope Bruxellam primus Prior: reperitur sub arbore ardente non comburente in diuina contemplatione absorptus. vixit ann. 88. obijt scriptis et miraculis clarus An. 1381. die 2. Dec.
Ioan. Boel excud.

ILLUSTRATION 3 *Ruusbroec Found, Enflamed in the Love of God*

was no interest in mystical literature whatsoever. The results of research conducted over the past 50 years, however, have proved this negative evaluation to be wrong.[13]

Concerning the first half of the 16th century, works by Maria van Hout, Eschius and Blosius, and more especially the *Pearl* and the *Temple*, evince

13 See the overview in Axters (1960).

the continued existence of a mysticism that was fundamentally inspired by Ruusbroec but which also had its own particular perspectives. An uninterrupted mystical tradition continued to exist, even during and after the riots of the subsequent years. Vervoort (†1555), who was actually a figure of the previous period, but whose works were published mostly in the second half of the 16th century, drew valuable texts from the spiritual heritage with which he was familiar and, with slight amendments, made them available to a wider audience. The work of Jan van Gorcum (†1619) may be considered in the same line. There is a clear mystical tone in the dialogue held in 1587 between Claesinne van Nieuwlant (†1611), a beguine from Ghent, and Pelgrim Pullen (†1608), a beguine leader from 's-Hertogenbosch, as well as in Pullen's many as-yet-unpublished treatises. Interest in mysticism inspired the Capuchin Alexius (†1621) to compile a *Schala anagogica* in 1600, in which he clarified every aspect of the spiritual life based on quotations from numerous mystical works.

At the end of the 16th century, the recently founded Capuchin Order witnessed what might be described as a 'mystical inundation.'[14] From contact with the works of medieval mystics, and influenced by French confreres, various brothers had developed ideas against which the superiors of the order felt they must react. In 1594, they issued a *Ceremoniale* that imposed restrictions on the reading of works by Ruusbroec, Herp, Tauler, and other mystical authors. Later, others outside the order also became involved in the opposition between the Ceremonials and the so-called Perfectists or Spirituals. Amongst them were two Spanish Carmelites living in Brussels who were apparently angered by the incorrect and dangerous interpretations of mystical terms. Nevertheless, one of them, the aforementioned Thomas a Jesu—an influential theologian—was one of the most prominent figures in the movement to beatify Ruusbroec, initiated in 1622. The movement involved ecclesiastical, secular, and scientific authorities. In 1624, the Capuchin Gabriel of Antwerp published *The Adornment of the Spiritual Espousals* (*T'cieraet der gheestelycker bruyloft*), in which one finds not only a biography of Ruusbroec but also the testimony of the universally respected Leonardus Lessius (†1623), in which he expressed his great admiration for Ruusbroec.[15]

14 Used as a characterizing expression by van Veghel (1948), p. 84.

15 See Ampe (1954), pp. 371–372.

Conclusion

In general terms, one may say that in this period and as a result of these events, mysticism assumed its own distinctive position in the counter-reformation climate of the Southern Low Countries in the 17th century. The vast majority of the extensive devotional literature published during this period is of an ascetic, moralizing, and didactic nature. In addition, however, many works and shorter treatises with mystical content were circulated in print and occasionally also in manuscript form. The word 'mystical,' however, has many diverse connotations. We must consider the mystical tradition of the Low Countries but also the varied influences from abroad: the German mystics, the French Capuchins, the Spanish Carmel, the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola and his order, the spirituality of P. de Bérulle, and various other movements. Not infrequently, these influences adopted characteristics from one another and were combined to create concrete forms. Familiar terms and concepts from the older tradition occasionally returned to the Low Countries with a modified content via a detour abroad. Words that formerly indicated a profound mystical experience were sometimes blurred because they were all too imprudently applied to experiences of ordinary piety.[16]

The production of mystical books thus was particularly diverse, of which the following is a limited selection.[17] In addition to reprints of the works of older writers and the translations of works by foreign mystics, the works of the Capuchins Constantinus of Barbençon (†1631), Joannes-Evangelista van 's-Hertogenbosch (†1635), Lucas van Mechelen (†1652), of the priest from Ghent Michiel Zachmoorter (†1660), of the Jesuits Antonius Sucquet (†1626) and Johannes Crombecius (†1626), of the Franciscans Bonifatius Maes (†1706) and Fulgentius Bottens[18] (†1717), of the Carmelite Michaël van Sint-Augustinus (†1684), and especially of Maria Petyt (†1677), in whose writings the mystical emphasis is undoubtedly most clear; there are also the spiritual glosses of the Benedictine Jeanne Deleloë (†1660) and of the hermit Karel Grimminck (†1728), the little book *The Foundation Stone of Perfection* (*Den grondt-steen der volmaecktheyt*) (1638), erroneously attributed to Grote, and the anonymously published work *Enclosed Garden* (*Besloten Hof*) (1658), which was reprinted often.

16 See Deblaere (1962), pp. 9–15, 128–141.

17 For a recommended list of works from 1589 to 1659, especially relating to the Capuchins, see Porteman (1978), pp. 153–164. Cf. also Porteman (1973).

18 Paulissen (1959).

Finally, to address the question of Ruusbroec's position in this period, it can be summarized in three aspects. First, concerning the continued after-effects of his thought: he was read both within and outside the monasteries, he continued to be a source of inspiration to authors who treated mysticism; he is both referenced and quoted (occasionally even in emblematic representations). Second, Ruusbroec was continuously venerated, which was occasionally given particularly poetic expression, such as in 1681 for example, on the occasion of the third centenary of his death, or in 1717 for the publication of a new biography. This veneration undoubtedly also had an effect on poetry and art. Third, Ruusbroec of course was always mentioned in bibliographic works, from Sweertius, Valerius Andreas, Miraeus, and Sanderus to Foppens and Paquot.

To conclude this overview, it must also be noted, for the sake of comprehensiveness, that interest in mysticism in the Low Countries undoubtedly waned during the 18th century, as a result of the prevailing Rationalist spirit of the age.

Overview of Ruusbroec Research

Loet Swart

As soon as John of Ruusbroec's works began to be circulated among communities of readers, the author acquired wide and even international acclaim.* Scientific interest in Ruusbroec's oeuvre has been developing since the mid-19th century. A foretaste of this development is to be found in the philological study of J.F. Willems, who wrote an article mapping Ruusbroec's prose in the field of letters.[1] The first synthesis of Ruusbroec's teaching is to be found in a book published in Switzerland (Zürich, 1855), in which Fr. Böhringer presents six 'German' mystical authors of the 14th and 15th centuries (Johannes Tauler, Heinrich Suso, Johannes Rusbroec, Gerhard Groot, Florentius Radewynzoon, Thomas von Kempen).[2] It was J.B. David, however, who ensured that Ruusbroec's works received much broader attention, thanks to his six-part work published between 1858 and 1866, which was based on the manuscripts available at the time. Despite the fact that this critical edition has all the attendant limitations and shortcomings, we take this publication to be the earliest demarcation of our overview of Ruusbroec research.

This overview comprises eight fields of research: 1) Historically Oriented Research; 2) Research into Authenticity, Chronology, and Occasion; 3) Manuscript Research and Editions; 4) Circulation and Reception; 5) Literary Research; 6) Philosophical Research; 7) Systematic-Theological Research; and 8) Spiritual-Theological Research.

In addition to studies within the eight aforementioned fields, we must also briefly consider several monographs and general introductions. The following are monographs published in Dutch: *Ruusbroec en zijn mystiek* (1981a) and *Jan van Ruusbroec: mystiek uit de Middeleeuwen* (1996) by Paul Verdeyen; *Ruusbroec: een inleiding tot zijn persoon en tijd* by Claude-Henri Rocquet (2000); and *Jan van Ruusbroec. Contemplatief theoloog in een moeilijke tijd* by Rob Faesen (2007). See also Beuken (1946, 1951). Among the general introductions, there are those which form part of a larger academic work on the history of mysticism (Cognet 1968, 1980; Ruh 1999) and others that provide an introduction to Ruusbroec in journal articles in languages other than Dutch—in

* This article was translated from the Dutch by John Arblaster.

1 See Ampe (1975a), pp. 536–538.

2 See Ampe (1975a), pp. 545–547.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_012

French (Huyben 1922 and Bonny 1982) or as a contribution to an Italian collection (Giovanna della Croce 1984).

Historically Oriented Research

Scientific research concerning Ruusbroec may be divided into five subcategories: 1) Ruusbroec's Life; 2) Historical Context; 3) Spiritual Milieu; 4) Sources; and 5) Iconography.

Ruusbroec's Life

Research into Ruusbroec's life is primarily concerned with an investigation of the historical sources. The most important medieval sources that inform us about John of Ruusbroec's life are the so-called *Prologue of Brother Gerard*, written by a Carthusian monk who was a contemporary of Ruusbroec, and a treatise by Henricus Pomerius (Hendrik Uten Bogaerde) on the foundation of the Priory of Groenendaal, which includes a second part containing a *Vita* of the mystic himself. The Middle Dutch text of Brother Gerard's 'Prologue' was published by De Vreese (1895, 6–20). The history of Groenendaal and the *Vita* of Ruusbroec are parts of a work written in Latin, which also includes the biography of Jan van Leeuwen, the 'good cook' of Groenendaal. This three-part commemorative volume is entitled *De origine monasterii Viridisvallis una cum Vitis B. Joannis Rusbrochii primi prioris hujus monasterii et aliquot coaetaneorum ejus*. The author entered the Priory of Groenendaal as a Regular Canon approximately 30 years after Ruusbroec's death. The text was published by the Bollandists (*De origine*, 1885).[3] Pomerius' *Vita* was also translated into Middle Dutch. The only extant manuscript containing a Middle Dutch translation was described and published by Verdeyen (1982e). On the occasion of the anniversary in 1981, the Prologue by Brother Gerard and the biography by Pomerius were made available to a broader readership in modern Dutch (Gerard of Saintes & Hendrik Utenbogaerde 1981). An overview of this and other sources concerning Ruusbroec's life is provided by Lindeman (1931).

Van Mierlo (1910a) examined the date of Pomerius' biography and presents a positive assessment of the canon's historical reliability. P. O'Sheridan, however, is dismissive, as he claims to detect numerous cases of historical falsification, and considers Groenendaal to be a foundation of an order inspired by Joachim

3 This edition was based on one manuscript. R. Lievens (1960a) provides an overview of a set of manuscripts containing *De origine*, a summary that is supplemented by Persoons (1961), which was in turn completed by Verdeyen (1981e).

of Fiore (O'Sheridan 1914, 1925). The flood of speculations he produced was refuted with excellent argumentation by Reypens (1914, 1926b). Ruusbroec scholars did not accept O'Sheridan's disparate interpretations, but they have since increasingly emphasized the hagiographical nature of Pomerius' *Vita*,[4] starting with Lefèvre (1933, 1936, 1962; see also Axters 1962).

Ruusbroec's life and works are presented relatively comprehensively in a number of articles, series of articles, and books—depending on the accepted historical insights of the period. After W. de Vreese and his 'Bijdragen tot de kennis van het leven en de werken van Jan van Ruusbroec' (De Vreese 1895, 1896), J. Van Mierlo published on 'Het leven en de werken van Jan van Ruysbroeck' (Van Mierlo 1910a+b+c), and D.A. Stracke described Ruusbroec's life and works in 'Jan van Ruusbroec's leven en karakter' (Stracke 1931) and 'Leven en werken van den Gelukzalige' (Stracke 1932). For the anniversary in 1981, Verdeyen (1981a) published his *Ruusbroec en zijn mystiek*, a primarily historical-biographical introduction to Ruusbroec in which he also discusses the works. In *Jan van Ruusbroec, mystiek licht uit de Middeleeuwen* (1996), Verdeyen brings his discussion up to date in a new presentation. In a number of articles, the same author (Verdeyen 1981d, 1981f, 1984) provides a reliable summary of historical research concerning Ruusbroec's life. De Ridder (1981) does the same.

Several authors were inspired by an element of Ruusbroec's biography that is known as the Bloemaerdinne case. Fredericq (1896) and Ruelens (1905) indicate that the name Heilwig Bloemaerts appears in various 13th- and 14th-century charters by aldermen of Brussels and question whether a person of this name may not have been the mystical author Hadewijch. J. Van Mierlo wrote ten articles in an ever-renewed attempt to persuade new adherents of this hypothesis of the contrary. Among other things, he argues that Hadewijch wrote in the mid-13th century and for this reason alone cannot be an eligible candidate for Pomerius' narration. Moreover, she was held in high esteem at Groenendaal and thus was unlikely to have been associated with heresy by Pomerius (Van Mierlo 1908, 1925a, 1925b, 1926, 1927a, 1927b, 1928a, 1933, 1934, 1937).[5] The author consistently defends Pomerius' reliability, countering O'Sheridan (Van Mierlo 1925b),[6] Nélis (Van Mierlo 1925a, 1926, 1928b), and

4 An inherent aspect of the hagiographical style is the embellishing or obscuring of less honorable elements. Various authors have suggested that the fact that no mention is made of Ruusbroec's father must be an indication that he was an illegitimate child (among others, Stracke, 1931). Lievens (1981) attempts to prove that Ruusbroec's uncle Jan Hinckaert was in fact his father.

5 For the contributions with the most summary character, see Van Mierlo (1926, 1927a, 1928a).

6 Against O'Sheridan (1925).

Lefèvre (Van Mierlo 1933).[7] While Van Mierlo was initially indifferent to the identification of Bloemaerdinne with the Heilwig Bloemaerts in the charters of Brussels—who died *c.*1335 and must in life have been an influential woman—this hypothesis became increasingly attractive to him (Van Mierlo 1927a, 1932a, 1933). The position was challenged by the contribution of Pl. Lefèvre, based on archival research, which documents the good relationship between Heilwig and the clergy of Brussels, and even Ruusbroec's uncle, Jan Hinckaert (Lefèvre 1933). Even more extensive archival research by Martens (1990) confirmed these findings. The conclusion that the Bloemaerdinne case cannot be the description of a historical controversy was generally adopted by, among others, Verdeyen (1981a, 1984) and Janssens (1984). The latter convincingly suggests that Pomerius' Bloemaerdinne story does not describe events from Ruusbroec's time but, rather, projects heretical connotations from his own time onto the life of the priest in Brussels.

The biography of Ruusbroec with which Warnar (2003a; see also 2003b) made the socio- and literary-historical context of Ruusbroec's works available to an audience with primarily cultural-historical interests contains a wealth of information. Its historical reliability, however, is not always entirely convincing. In *Ruusbroec. Literatuur en mystiek in de veertiende eeuw*, the author links the scarce facts we have about Ruusbroec's life to comparable historical conventions and events, corresponding facts and testimonies, presumed backgrounds, and plausible insights. The result is an exceedingly fresh, colorful, and innovative portrait of Ruusbroec, with optimal documentation of the possible context.

Historical Context

The historical context in which Ruusbroec developed his mystical authorship may justly be referred to as a 'poor relation' of Ruusbroec research. Scarcely any attention is paid to the political, economic, and general cultural context. We may mention the contribution of Poukens & Reypens (1931), which provides an overview of the political relations in Flanders and Brabant, as well as the ecclesiastical-cultural context of Ruusbroec's life. Lefèvre (1942) offers an extensive description of the ecclesiastical organization of medieval Brussels. The contours of social and political unrest in the 14th century were further elaborated by De Wilde (1981). In an article on the experience of uncertainty in the Late Middle Ages—'Ervaring van onzekerheid in de late Middeleeuwen'—Weiler (1984) sketches a scene of disasters and uncertainty, and places the reaction of nominalism in this context, while both Vekeman (1981) and Wackers

7 Against Lefèvre (1933).

(1989b) provide extensive discussions of the medieval perception of the cosmos, and examine the relationship between astrological concepts at the time and Ruusbroec's allegorical descriptions of the mystical life.

A less extensive though by no means insignificant study of the historical context was conducted by Dykmans (1940). Furthermore, a wealth of historical information came to light thanks to the publication of the Obituary of Groenendaal—via the necrologies of the members of the priory—which allow the circumstances of Ruusbroec's monastic life to be determined more precisely. See also Van Mierlo (1941) and Reypens (1943b).

Until recently, the literary-historical context remained grossly neglected. De Vreese (1962), however, indicates the high culture we may infer from a library such as that of Rooklooster, while Janssens (1981) discusses Ruusbroec's confreres who were also authors and the industrious translation and copying activities at Groenendaal. Since the early 1990s, in an series of articles, G. Warnar has advocated greater attention to situating Ruusbroec's works in their (literary) historical context. The development of lay piety is an important aspect in this regard (Warnar 1992). Moreover, Warnar (1993a, p. 172) emphasizes that the first series of Ruusbroec's treatises was not written in 'monastic tranquility' but amid 'urban bustle': Ruusbroec was one of the earliest urban Middle Dutch authors. In his article 'Meester Eckhart, Walther van Holland en Jan van Leeuwen' (1995), he intended to indicate that a study of the Middle Dutch *Dialoog van meester Eckhart en de leek*—a 14th-century text—may reveal insights into the historical and literary-historical background of Ruusbroec's work. Warnar seeks to convince us 'that the contours of Ruusbroec's audience are hinted at in the *Dialoog*.' 'Een sneeuwbui in het Zoniënwoud' (Warnar 1997a), 'Jan van Ruusbroec and the Social Position of Late Medieval Mysticism' (Warnar 1999), and 'Mystik in der Stadt' (Warnar 2000a) were written with the intention to integrate Ruusbroec's texts within the sociocultural context of Middle Dutch literature.

Finally, a field of research that may not be overlooked is the history and iconography of Groenendaal (Verjans 1931; Reypens 1932d; Persoons 1970; Ampe 1981e; Erkens 1981b, 1981c, 1993; De Ridder 1993). Lemmens (1990) provides a helpful inventory of this subject.

Spiritual Milieu

The aforementioned scarcity of research relating to the general and literary-historical context also applies, though to a lesser extent, to the spiritual milieu against the background of which Ruusbroec's works are to be interpreted. Ruusbroec scholars have highlighted four aspects. The first concerns the Church and monastic life. While Huijben (1931) investigates Ruusbroec's

connections to conventuals, hermits, and the Friends of God, Burger (1993) demonstrates that Ruusbroec considered the Church to constitute the self-evident spiritual milieu. The second aspect concerns mystical literature that circulated in the Low Countries and formed the context of Ruusbroec's authorship (Van Mierlo 1932b and Verdeyen 1981b). In this regard, Faesen (2007) describes contemplative theology as an ancient tradition that was abandoned. A third aspect relates to the place and the role of the beguines. Épiney-Burgard (1984b) concludes that in this respect, one must primarily consider the influence of texts. The same is probably true, though in a negative way, of Ruusbroec's involvement with the Brethren of the Free Spirit. This brings us to the fourth aspect: that of heretical movements. In his 'Ruusbroec's bestrijding van de ketterij,' Van Mierlo (1932a) discusses the rejection of heretical opinions in each of Ruusbroec's works, treating Eckhart explicitly in the last part.[8] Schweitzer (1982, 1984) compares Ruusbroec's treatment of false doctrines with texts from the milieu of the free spirit. On the one hand, the positions rejected by the Brabantine mystic correspond in detail to treatises such as *Schwester Katrei*, the *Miroir* by Marguerite Porete, and circulated beghard texts, while on the other, the author of the *Espousals* does not do justice to these opinions in his commentary. See also Colledge & Marler (1984) on Ruusbroec, Eckhart, and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*. In her article 'La critique d'Eckhart par Ruusbroec et son disciple Jean de Leeuwen,' Épiney-Burgard (1984a) reaches a similar conclusion. She indicates passages in *The XII Beguines* that appear to be extracted from the sermon *Beati pauperes spiritu* and rejected. The condemnation of statements from the works of Eckhart promulgated in the papal bull *In agro dominico* was, however, known at Groenendaal. Verdeyen demonstrates (1992) that Ruusbroec must almost certainly have known and read the anonymous treatise *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (written by a beguine from Valenciennes, Marguerite Porete). Ruusbroec responds to passages from this work in *The Spiritual Espousals*. According to Verdeyen, Ruusbroec's reaction was not directed primarily against the text 'but more so against the weavers who used this text as a pamphlet to attack the Church, the sacraments and all forms of prayer and good works.'[9] See also Feys (1991).

Ruusbroec's Sources

Wautier d'Aygalliers (1923) was the first author to provide an extensive discussion of the influence of older theological and philosophical traditions and

8 Compare also Kok (1973): 'Jan van Leeuwen en zijn werkje tegen Eckhart.'

9 Verdeyen (1992), p. 93.

precursors with respect to mystical literature.[10] Based on scholastic and Neo-Platonist principles, he presents a range of writers and movements that may be considered sources of Ruusbroec's mystical authorship. The significant place Wautiers d'Aygalliers ascribes to Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure has not been confirmed by subsequent research.[11] Nor has the 'echo of Neo-Platonism' which d'Asbeck (1930) descried in Ruusbroec been adopted as an interpretative framework.

The least contentious and most researched area is the influence of older mystical authors on Ruusbroec. Axters expatiates broadly on this influence in his handbook *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in de Nederlanden* (Axters 1953, 261–277). See also Van Poppel (1912b, 1913a, 1913b). In addition to the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine, Axters indicates, among others, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St.-Thierry, and Hadewijch. Ruusbroec's integration of certain anthropological and theological concepts from William of Saint-Thierry had earlier been deemed probable by Willeumier-Schalij (1947). Ampe (1953) focused on the inspiration of Bernard. Verdeyen (1977, 1995a) further researched the influence of both William and Bernard—and of William via Bernard. Important new research concerning 'the exploration of sources' may be found in the doctoral dissertation of Pyong-Gwan Pak (2008). Axters (1953, 1964a, 1964b) and Reynaert (1981) treat the effects of Hadewijch on Ruusbroec's oeuvre. Prior to examining Ruusbroec's works for possible influences, Reynaert provides a critical discussion of the preceding research. Épiney-Burgard (1984b) reveals that Ruusbroec used texts by Hadewijch primarily to comment and expand upon them and to integrate her thought into his own.

Various studies have demonstrated that Ruusbroec made use of summaries and translations in diverse scientific fields. Van den Berghe (1949) suggests that passages in the *Tabernacle* were taken from the *Historia scholastica*, an abridging biblical narrative by Peter Comestor. Van der Krabben (1935) also indicates the Venerable Bede as a source for the *Tabernacle*. Bastings (1991) demonstrates that Ruusbroec's descriptions of birds in the *Tabernacle* are indebted to *Der naturen bloeme* by Jacob van Maerlant, the Middle Dutch translation of the

10 See the critique of Van Mierlo in 'Ruysbroeck in Frankrijk' (Van Mierlo 1925c). An extensive description of Wautier d'Aygalliers (1923) is in Will (1926).

11 The contribution by Van Nieuwenhove (2001b) is a research of sources rather than affinities. It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that no clear dependence or quotations may be indicated, an important distinction may be made. A predominant Franciscan rather than Dominican inspiration may be identified based on a number of theological statements in Ruusbroec's work.

Liber de natura rerum by Thomas of Cantimpré.[12] Schepers (1999) indicates the *Compendium theologicae veritatis* by Hugo Ripelin as a source for *The Realm of Lovers* and *On Christian Faith*. Kors (1998) notes that in the fourth part of the *Beguines*, Ruusbroec made use of a Gospel harmony, namely, the S redaction of the *Leven van Jezus*, and he further notes that Ruusbroec also drew on other traditions related to the crucifixion of Jesus. Where necessary, however, the mystical author adapted the story to his own needs: Ruusbroec was an author rather than a compiler.

Iconography

Laenen (1910) was the first scholar to devote an article to the iconography of Ruusbroec. He categorizes certain representations as being of the literary type (Ruusbroec as a writer, with attributes such as a wax tablet), while others are of the religious type (the mystic experiencing transcendent illumination). Approximately one decade later, a number of previously unknown works emerged. Reypens (1924a, 1924b) provides a journalistic report of the discovery (rediscovery) of a small portrait of Ruusbroec, which he considers possibly to be a true likeness. In all probability, the portrait is a 16th-century copy of a much older miniature. See also Reypens (1969) and Erkens (1981a). In an overview article, Reypens (1931b) gives an impression of the new general sketch of iconographic material, including another rediscovered work, the so-called 'Honorary Panel of Groenendaal.' A precise description of the figures on this panel, their attributes, and the inscriptions followed a year later (Reypens 1932b).

Ampe (1974) accomplished a work of pure detection, connecting Pomerius' biography to 22 paintings that must have hung in the cloister of Groenendaal, based on a document from the milieu of Groenendaal and Rooklooster (1681: the third centenary of Ruusbroec's death). The same author, writing six years after Pomerius, sketched the iconography of Ruusbroec in a work entitled 'Ruusbroec in beeld' (Ampe 1981b; see also 1981a, 1981d). In a separate article (Ampe 1983), he focused on the work of the painter and illustrator Karel Doudelet.

The description of a large number of representations in the Ruusbroec catalogue of 1981 is of great importance for research into Ruusbroec iconography.

12 Huijben (1927) had previously indicated quotes from Thomas of Cantimpré, some of which came via van Maerlant. Concerning the series of gemstones described in the *Tabernacle*, no derivation from van Maerlant can be identified. 'The similarities with Bartholomaeus Anglicus are far clearer' (Bastings (1995), p. 97).

Research into the Authenticity, Chronology, and Occasion of Ruusbroec's Works

The contributions will be discussed under the following subheadings: 1) Authenticity; 2) Chronology; and 3) Occasion.

Authenticity

Chapter 16 of Pomerius' *Vita* ('Over het aantal en de volgorde van zijn werken'—'On the Number and Order of his Works') appears to provide accurate information. Ruusbroec's letters are left unmentioned, but a work that tradition would soon ascribe to Ruusbroec, *The XII Virtues*, had not yet been added to the list. This work is, in fact, a simplification of a part of *The Spiritual Espousals* and Eckhart's *Reden der Unterscheidung*. Bouman (1922) considered the *Virtues* to be a compiling revision of Eckhart by Ruusbroec. He attempted to demonstrate that the author used the summary for his catalogue of the virtues in the *Espousals*. J. van Mierlo combated these positions by defending the priority of the *Espousals* over the compilation (Van Mierlo 1923a) and providing numerous arguments against the attribution of the *Virtues* to Ruusbroec (Van Mierlo 1923b; see also Van Mierlo 1922, 1925d).[13] O'Sheridan (1928/1929) attempted to prove that Ruusbroec was himself responsible for the Latin translation of the *Espousals* read by the Chancellor of Paris Jean Gerson. Lievens (1957) plausibly argues that two songs attributed to Ruusbroec by Laurentius Surius did not flow from the didactic pen of the Brabantine mystic. Reypens (1943a), Lievens (1960d), and Ampe (1964) examined the origin and circulation of a number of shorter texts formerly ascribed to Ruusbroec.

The seven letters translated into Latin by Surius are not mentioned in Pomerius' *Vita*, and the Middle Dutch texts upon which the translations were based were lost for many years. Lievens (1964, 1980) found and published the first and the second letter. K. Schepers (2001) added an as-yet-unknown letter by Ruusbroec to the first seven. It is a Latin translation in which the hand of Willem Jordaens may be descried.

Chronology

The chronology of Ruusbroec's works has been meticulously examined by Warnar (1994). He objects to the twofold division that is usually proposed (a Brussels period and a Groenendaal period) and argues that the tripartite

13 Lievens (1960c) does not exclude the possibility that the *XII Virtues* was also authored by Ruusbroec but offers few arguments either for or against the position. See Ampe (1967) on Geert Grote as the possible translator of the Latin text.

history (priest in Brussels, priest in Groenendaal, canon in Groenendaal) must be taken seriously. Moreover, he defends a strict interpretation of *post ingressum religionis*, a marginal note in the table of contents of the Groenendaal MS of Ruusbroec's collected works, as a reference to Ruusbroec's profession as a regular canon. If the author wrote a large part (*pro magna parte*) of the *Tabernacle* as a *presbiter secularis*, we need not think of the Brussels period. This reading suggests a later dating for this work than has hitherto generally been assumed, which also results in a more convincing sketch of Ruusbroec's literary production. On the basis of the table of contents and the rubrics in the manuscripts, Kienhorst & Kors (2001) defend a completely new position on the issue of chronology, in which only the *Realm* and the majority of the *Tabernacle* were produced in the Brussels period. On this reading, the *Espousals* would have been written in the period after 1350, the year in which Ruusbroec became a canon and first prior of the Priory of Groenendaal.[14]

Occasion

The only contribution to be dedicated entirely to the issue of the occasion of Ruusbroec's works is that of Ampe (1971). His article is premised on the idea that *The Seven Enclosures* was written as a letter (incipit: *Dear Sister*), the addressee of which is identified as the Brussels Poor Clare Margriet van Meerbeke in notations in a number of manuscripts. By providing a more meticulous analysis of textual and epigraphic details, and a new interpretation of the poems that accompany the *Mirror*, the author convincingly argues that this work was also written as a letter, and probably also addressed to the same Sister Margriet van Meerbeke.[15] Concerning *The Seven Rungs*, it is impossible to trace the addressee on the basis of notations in the manuscripts. Various themes, however, connect this work to the *Enclosures* and the *Mirror*.

In more general studies, Warnar (2004a, 2004b) treats the 'female audience' of Ruusbroec's letters and his perception of religious women.

14 See also Kienhorst & Kors (2003).

15 Compare, however, Ampe (1981c), p. 41: 'The available information does not compel us to identify this Poor Clare with the aforementioned Margriet van Meerbeke, as we consider it more realistic that Ruusbroec had more acquaintances than we have been able to ascertain' (with a reference to a number of exhibited manuscripts).

Manuscript Research and Editions

We will discuss this research field in three subheadings: 1) Research of Manuscript Dissemination; 2) Collections and Codices; and 3) Critical Editions.

Research into Manuscripts Dissemination

Manuscript research is fundamental to Ruusbroec studies. Willem de Vreese was the great pioneer in this field. He not only published a number of Middle Dutch texts about Ruusbroec but was also and especially the systematic and indefatigable hunter of unknown Ruusbroec manuscripts, which he described extensively and thus made available for closer research and text editions. His descriptions were given a place in a two-volume, 700-page work (De Vreese 1900–1902), which should have been followed by a third volume.[16] The Jesuits D.A. Stracke, J. Van Mierlo, and L. Reypens, who would later found the Ruusbroec Institute, followed in his wake, searching for unknown manuscripts in international libraries.[17] For example, Stracke (1914) reports on his research into Dutch-language manuscripts and incunabula in Austro-Hungary. The description of individual manuscripts in the tradition of De Vreese has remained a constant area of Ruusbroec studies. Stracke (1928), Reypens (1943c), and Van Elslander (1959) examine Ruusbroec manuscripts or fragments in the Premonstratensian Abbey of Averbode, a Charterhouse in Roermond and at Rooklooster. Later, J. Deschamps would describe a large number of manuscripts for the exhibition on the occasion of the Ruusbroec commemoration in 1981 (*Tentoonstellingscatalogus* 1981). Various contributions by researchers at the Ruusbroec Institute and others are part of this tradition. Alaerts (1975a) describes a manuscript containing works by Herp and Ruusbroec and provides a description of an *Espousals* manuscript (Alaerts 1987). De Baere (1969) examines MS AA, which contains, among others, Ruusbroec's *Little Book*, while De Baere (1987) discusses a Brussels manuscript with Ruusbroec's *On Christian Faith*, and Kienhorst & Kors (1998b) treat a fragment of an unknown Ruusbroec collection manuscript.

Research into individual manuscripts has also led to comparisons and conclusions regarding the historical setting of Ruusbroec's works and the interpretation of certain data. Reypens (1970) and Ampe (1975c) thus clarify the textual transmission of the *Espousals* and the *Stone*, respectively. One step in the preparation of critical editions of texts consists in comparing and

16 Much information about his life project and research into the Ruusbroec manuscripts in general may be found in an article by Bouwman & Warnar (1994).

17 Bouwman & Warnar (1994), p. 316.

evaluating inconsistencies in various manuscripts of the same work. For example, De Baere (1972) investigated the variants in the *Little Book* in MS Vv compared to the critically revised text of MS F in the third part of Ruusbroec's *Works*, leading him to a positive evaluation of MS Vv. Occasionally, a detail transmitted differently in the various manuscripts presents the editor with a text-critical problem. Noë (1985a) provides an overview of the number variants in *The Four Temptations* concerning the ages[18] at which Ruusbroec says the human person has not yet found—but later does find—inner rest and peace. By analyzing what Ruusbroec must have considered sacred numbers, she not only makes a text-critical decision but also interprets the mystical author's psychological insight.

Collections and Codices

Research into manuscript collections and codices is of the greatest importance to attain a reliable evaluation of the manuscripts for use in editions, but also for a more accurate view of the milieu in which Ruusbroec's works were written and transmitted. Reypens (1923) examines the extant second part (MS A) of the original Groenendaal codex. According to Reypens, this standard text was originally created as one volume shortly before Ruusbroec's death but had to be divided in the 15th century because its sheer size was damaging the spine. When the volume was divided, the original order of the works was changed because the text of *The Spiritual Tabernacle* would otherwise have been divided between the two volumes. Three later works (*Enclosures, Little Book*, and *Beguines*) were moved to the front. On the basis of meticulous codicological-philological research of the extant second part of the Groenendaal MS, Kienhorst & Kors (1998a) posit a new interpretation of its creation in stages. In approximately 1365, a codex was compiled at Groenendaal comprising—in chronological order—the nine works that Ruusbroec had written up until that date (from the *Realm* to the *Rungs*). Shortly after Ruusbroec's death, the community wanted to add his later works (*Little Book* and *Beguines*) to the collection, but the sheer size of the *Beguines* could not be accommodated in the original codex. The original was thus taken apart, and the 11 works were divided into two volumes. Because *The Spiritual Tabernacle* was considered Ruusbroec's *magnum opus*, the compilers placed it first, along with the well-known Ruusbroec miniature. In addition to the lengthy *Tabernacle*, the *Mirror* and the *Rungs* were also placed in the first part. All the other works were placed in the second part. A corrective response may be consulted in Alaerts (2000).

18 See also Lievens (1983).

Kienhorst & Kors (1998a) also discuss the earliest transmission of Ruusbroec's work. Originally, it was circulated in the form of small-format manuscripts, but they only survive with later bindings, as volumes of heterogeneous composition. Further, Kienhorst & Kors (1998a) describe the collections of Ruusbroec's work made shortly afterwards. They then compare these to other manuscripts of collected works, which occasionally evince different views of text compilation. One of these collections is Dutch MS D, which displays an early form of critical editing. This research sheds new light on the 'Descendant' (*Nacomelinc*), who until recently was considered to be the compiler and copyist of MS D. Kienhorst & Kors (1998c) posit that the *Nacomelinc* travelled to Groenendaal to compare a codex that he had in his possession with the collected works at the priory. On the basis of his findings, he then wrote a programmatic text for copyists and patrons interested in Ruusbroec. His instructions were closely followed by the compiler of MS D.

Critical Editions

Reliable editions are indispensible to Ruusbroec researchers who do not have the manuscripts at their disposal or are insufficiently skilled at paleography. Although it does not satisfy the criteria of a scientific critical edition, we must begin our overview with J.B. David's publication of Ruusbroec's work. It appeared as five parts printed in six volumes, of which the last was prepared by F.A. Snellaert after David's death (David edition, 1858–1868). In the first quarter of the 20th century, Prof. L. Scharpé (Leuven University) devoted himself to a new critical edition of Ruusbroec's works.[19] This resulted in three editions: *The Seven Rungs* by Müller (1911), the third book of the *Espousals* by Reypens,[20] and the *Stone*, by the same Müller, who had changed the spelling of his name to Muller after the First World War (1921). As the commemoration of the 550th anniversary of Ruusbroec's death approached, an increasing need was felt for a new and complete edition of the works. The Ruusbroec Institute committed to the task, resulting in a four-volume edition (edition of *Werken*, 1932–1934), which was reprinted ten years later (edition of *Werken*, 1944–1948). The texts were edited by J.B. Poukens (*Realm*), D.A. Stracke (*Tabernacle*), J. Van Mierlo (*Beguines*), and L. Reypens (remaining works).[21] Due to time constraints, however, the publishers used only one exemplar for the *Tabernacle, Mirror*, and *Rungs* (MS A) and one for the remaining works (MS F), well aware that their

19 See Ampe (1975a), pp. 601–602 and Mertens (1993a), p. 74.

20 See Ampe (1975a), pp. 609–617.

21 See Reypens (1921) on the need for a new edition of the *Espousals* and a description of the Middle Dutch sources for the text criticism of this work.

work had not yet produced a definitive critical edition. The Ruusbroec Institute thus continued to foster a desire to create a complete edition of Ruusbroec's works that would stand the test of criticism. New research functioned as a stepping stone towards the *Opera omnia* project. Initially, De Baere (1969) provided a diplomatic edition of the *Little Book*. He later obtained his doctorate with the dissertation *Jan van Ruusbroec, Vanden seven sloten. Overlevering, kritische uitgave, inhoud* (3 vols, 1976).

When another commemoration approached (1981), sufficient preliminary work had been done to publish the first two volumes of the *Opera omnia* (*The Little Book of Enlightenment* and *The Seven Enclosures*). Volume three followed in 1988 (*The Spiritual Espousals*), volume ten in 1991 (*The Sparkling Stone, The Four Temptations, The Christian Faith, Letters*), volume seven in 2000 (*The XII Beguines*), volume eight in 2001 (*A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*), volume four in 2002 (*The Realm of Lovers*), volume nine in 2003 (*The Seven Rungs*), and volumes five and six in 2006 (*The Spiritual Tabernacle*). The *Opera omnia* was edited by J. Alaerts (*Espousals, Realm*), G. De Baere (*Little Book, Enclosures, Faith, Mirror*), M. Kors (*Beguines*), Th. Mertens (*Letters, Tabernacle*), H. Noë (*Stone, Temptations*), and R. Faesen (*Rungs*). On the occasion of the publication of the first two volumes of the *Opera omnia*, De Baere (1984a) discussed a number of fundamental issues: the advantages and disadvantages of different exemplars for the individual works of the critical edition and the option for a diplomatic or critical edition (see also De Baere 2002b). Rolfson (1984) wrote about her own translation of Ruusbroec in American English. On the project's progress, see De Baere (1992, 2000a) and Noë (1985b). Mertens (2010) places the scientific edition of Ruusbroec's works in historical perspective. In this regard, see also Norbert Ubarri (2010).

Finally, we must mention research of manuscripts that is conducted not with a view to editions but in order to acquire clearer insight into the composition of a particular work. Based on various codicological details, Kors (1999) researched and interpreted textual divisions in relevant manuscripts of *The XII Beguines* in order to respond to the question of how many parts the text originally consisted of, and who compiled the complete text.

Circulation and Reception

The discussion of this field of research will consist of six subthemes: 1) General Circulation and Reception; 2) Manuscript Circulation and Earliest Printed Versions; 3) Reception Research along Primarily Historical Lines; 4) Reception Research along Primarily Geographic Lines; 5) Research into the Influence

of Ruusbroec's Works and Thought; and 6) Research and Critical Editions of Foreign-Language Textual Traditions.

General Circulation and Reception

The year 1975 saw the publication of A. Ampe's extensive work on the general reception of Ruusbroec: *Ruusbroec. Traditie en werkelijkheid*. In the first place, it contains a detailed untangling of the traditional image of Ruusbroec as it was consolidated relatively soon after his death. Of central importance are the roles Willem Jordaens, Jan van Schoonhoven, and Henricus Pomerius played in the provocation of and resistance to the Gerson controversy. Furthermore, Ampe's book provides a meticulous and extensive discussion of the way in which the mystic's work was circulated and received over the course of almost 600 years since his death. The second part is inherently driven by the author's aim of discovering the real Ruusbroec ('reality') behind all the adoptions and adaptations of the traditional image of Ruusbroec ('tradition'). In fact, Ampe's work is thus consonant with what he sketches in the last chapter: a critical presentation of the image of Ruusbroec and of his work as it developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. This study is a *Fundgrube* for anybody involved in Ruusbroec reception. Anyone who finds Ampe's work too detailed and too lengthy will, however, be pleasantly surprised by the succinctly written overview 'De invloed van Jan van Ruusbroec in en buiten de Nederlanden' by Andriessen (1984). See also 'Nabloei en invloed tot omstreeks 1800' (Andriessen 1981b).[22] The contributions of Mertens (1993a, 1993c) are more introductory, anecdotal, and intended to be less comprehensive: 'Ghescreven waerheit blivet staen. De receptie van Ruusbroecs werken' and 'De uitstraling van Ruusbroec.' The same author investigated the image of Ruusbroec in the Middle Dutch manuscripts and the way MS D deals with its sources (Mertens 1995). Schepers (2010) researched the question of the extent to which the literary style of the translations of Ruusbroec by Willem Jordaens and Geert Grote affected their reception. Ampe (1981d) devotes a number of pages to the veneration of Ruusbroec.

Manuscript Circulation and Earliest Printed Versions

Circulation and reception are very closely linked, but there are certain issues that precede the question of a work's appreciation. Research questions focused primarily on tracing and 'data,' resulting in overviews by Deschamps (1981a, 1981b, 1982), who studied manuscript circulation, and by Andriessen (1981a) and Cockx-Indestege (1981), who studied the circulation of both early and later printed books. Kienhorst & Kors (1998a) researched the 'corpus

22 In translation in this volume.

molding' of Ruusbroec's works. They indicate a first stage of circulation in smaller manuscripts, followed early in the second half of the 14th century by the first collections of Ruusbroec's works. See also the tenth chapter of 'Nederlandse mystieken in het buitenland, van Rupert van Deutz tot Ruusbroec' (Axters 1965).

Reception Research along Primarily Historical Lines

The blackest page in the history of Ruusbroec reception was written by Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris (1363–1429). The Schoonhoven-Gerson controversy was meticulously described and discussed in voluminous publications by Combes (1945a, 1948, 1959, 1972), and his analysis, in turn, was completely unraveled in studies by Ampe (1960b, 1975a). The earliest reception in German-speaking territories, 'Ruusbroec onder de godsvrienden,' was discussed in an article by Mertens (1997). See Warnar (2003c, 2009) for the possible relationship between Ruusbroec and Tauler. For the manuscripts, see Reypens (1950a). The Carthusians were of great significance in the circulation of Ruusbroec's works and the authentication of his name. Emery (1979) focuses especially on the trust Dionysius the Carthusian (1402–1471) placed in the Brabantine mystic, whom he considered to be a second Dionysius the Areopagite. In his presentation 'Ruusbroec et les Chartreux,' Verdeyen (1995b) provides a concise overview of the association between Ruusbroec and the Carthusians. He first discusses Ruusbroec's relationship with Brother Gerard, the Carthusian of Herne, followed by the circulation of Ruusbroec manuscripts via charterhouses and the influence of his works on Dionysius the Carthusian. Finally, he treats the Latin translation of Ruusbroec's entire oeuvre by Laurentius Surius at Cologne. The circumstances of the latter's publication are discussed in a contribution by Chaix (1984). After indicating the place of the translated edition of 1552 in the context of the literary activity of the Saint Barbara Charterhouse at Cologne, he analyzes the dedication letter by the prior, Gerard Kalkbrenner, revealing that the edition had a threefold objective, namely, as a work intended to support the Counter Reformation, as an introduction to contemplative life, and as a project of rehabilitation, in order to clear Ruusbroec's name from the suspicion Gerson had cast upon it. A subsequent analysis of the *Index rerum et sententiarum* appended to the translation confirms the various Counter Reformation intentions of the Surius edition, as they had already been highlighted in the dedication letter.

Within the historical framework, we must also take a more specific question into account, namely, concerning the image of Ruusbroec sketched in certain manuscripts containing one or more of his complete works or only fragments and excerpts. Research by Willeumier-Schalij (1981) demonstrates that there was a shift in the preference of certain treatises. Summarizing authors or

translators occasionally valued and thus adopted devotional or moralizing passages, while they sometimes had difficulty with certain mystical expressions. Willeumier-Schalij's research covers the entire character of the medieval period. Both Warnar (1993b) and Mertens (1995) investigated the accompanying texts in so-called MS D (*c.*1461), which contains the prologue by Brother Gerard. The prologue claims that Ruusbroec's works are consonant with the teaching of the Church but also that the Carthusian and a number of his confreres were perplexed by certain passages in the *Realm*. The epilogue of the 'Nacomelinc,' in contrast, considers Ruusbroec almost exclusively from the perspective of his works. The texts contain heavenly teaching, 'more divine or angelic than human.' Furthermore, the manuscript contains two laudations by Jan van Leeuwen. Ruusbroec's reception in the first century of the Society of Jesus is discussed in Faesen (2010).

Reception Research along Primarily Geographic Lines

Mertens (1994) provides an overview of 'Ruusbroec in het buitenland' ('Ruusbroec Abroad'). A considerable amount of research is devoted to the penetration of Ruusbroec's work in a certain country or linguistic region. The oldest such subject concerns the circulation of Ruusbroec in Germany. Mertens (1997) demonstrates how the circulation of a number of Ruusbroec's works in German-speaking regions occurred through the circle of the Friends of God in Strasbourg. They circulated four works: the *Espousals*, the *Stone*, the *Temptations*, and the *Little Book*. It is possible that Ruusbroec himself sent the first three to Rulman Merswin in 1350. The latter made an excerpting edition based on the first two books of the *Espousals*, entitled *Das Buoch von der fúrkomenen gnoden und von der verdienlichen gnoden*. Other excerpts, especially from the *Espousals*, were transposed into a collection bearing the name *Ein guot lere des Taulers*.[23] Colledge (1952) researched circulation in England in the first quarter of the 15th century and the role of the Carthusians therein. *The Sparkling Stone* was translated into Middle English from Latin, as was part of the *Espousals*, which was anonymously added to a different treatise.[24] Research by Sargent (1985) confirms that the translation of the *Stone* was based on the Latin version by Willem Jordaens. Cré (2010) indicates the entreating and safely guiding role of the Ruusbroec fragments in *The Chastising of God's Children*. Guarnieri (1952) discusses Ruusbroec's reception in Italy. Martinelli Spanò (1973) focuses primarily on the context in which the 1538 Bologna edition of Ruusbroec was published. Using *The Sparkling Stone*, Behiels (2010)

23 Research into later Ruusbroec reception in Protestant-Pietist circles in Germany is discussed in the next paragraph.

24 See Ampe (1957b, 1975a).

provides an exemplary study of Blas López' (2 vols, 1696 and 1698) Spanish translation of Ruusbroec's works, which was based on the Latin translation by Laurentius Surius. De Ronde (1925) presents an extremely concise overview of all the known reactions to Ruusbroec in France after Gerson, irrespective of their nature or content. More general appreciation of the mystic's work developed there later than elsewhere. Axters (1973), Nachtergaele (1981), and Kesteman (1984) provide an impression of acquaintance with Ruusbroec in French literary circles from the second half of the 19th century. Thanks to, successively, Ernest Hello and Maurice Maeterlinck, more authors were introduced to Ruusbroec, including J.-K. Huysmans and Léon Bloy. De Baere (1998), Faesen (1998), and De Baere & Faesen (1999) report on the recent appreciation for Ruusbroec in China. Finally, Ruusbroec has also been translated into Japanese (Umans 1992), and Chinese (Chen 2011).

Research into the Influence of Ruusbroec's Works and Thought

A number of studies must be highlighted less for their historical or geographical characteristics than for their discussion of Ruusbroec's influence on representative people and movements. The Modern Devotion is sometimes described as the practical experience or elaboration of Ruusbroec's mysticism. Persoons (1981) has written a general study on Ruusbroec and the Modern Devotion. In his dissertation, Freeman (1959) treated the influence of Ruusbroec on Geert Grote and Johannes Tauler. De Baere (1985) compares two texts by Geert Grote to Ruusbroec's reflections on the *common life*, specifically in *The Little Book of Enlightenment*. Grote was undoubtedly familiar with the Brabantine mystic's teaching, and he probably also knew the *Little Book*. He does, however, simplify Ruusbroec's three-part mystical description (to go out—to go in—rest) to two parts (to go out—to go in). On Ruusbroec and the Modern Devotion, see also Beyer de Ryke (1999, 2000).

In the figure of Hendrik Herp, Verschueren (1931) primarily treats a representative of the second generation of followers, though he also discusses the more lengthy and widespread influence on Franciscan spirituality. See also Lieftinck (1931) on Hendrik Mande. During the Spanish Golden Age, John of the Cross (1542–1591) almost certainly read and assimilated Ruusbroec. Enrique del Sagrado Corazón (1950) investigates 'Ruusbroec como fuente de influencia posible en S. Juan de la Cruz.'[25] Erb (1984) researches the use of Ruusbroec's texts by the Pietist Lutheran poet, historian, and pastor Gottfried Arnold (1666–1714), who was responsible for the first complete translation of

25 In his article 'Ruusbroec en Juan de la Cruz,' Reypens (1931c) had already indicated the medieval mystic's influence on the Spaniard. More than research into the accepted influence, however, the article is a comparison of corresponding thought.

Ruusbroec into German. He not only integrated Ruusbroec's work into his own systematic theology and spirituality but also used it as an early defense of his theological position.

Research focused on Ruusbroec's influence on later authors is often not conducted in Ruusbroec studies as such; this research is usually conducted from the opposite perspective. One example is Épiney-Burgard (1970) in her study on *Geert Grote (1340–1384) et les débuts de la dévotion moderne*. Moreover, Ruusbroec is often placed in a broader context of influence. The majority of the discussion of Ruusbroec (and other 'German' mystics) as a source occurs in literature on Spanish mysticism, such as the contributions by Groult (1927, 1961), Hatzfeld (1946), Sanchis Alventosa (1946), Orcibal (1959, 1966), Giovanna della Croce (1960), and Norbert Ubarri (2007, 2010).

Research and Critical Editions of Foreign-Language Textual Traditions

The publication of critical editions of Ruusbroec's works is not limited to the Middle Dutch texts. There are also international textual traditions that have become the subject of permanent interest in Ruusbroec research and have resulted in both new editions and new contributions. The three principal subjects of the oldest Ruusbroec traditions are the medieval Latin, German, and English translations.

When Ph. Müller published his new editions of *The Seven Rungs* (1911) and *The Sparkling Stone* (1921) before and after the First World War, he supplemented the Middle Dutch text with the critical edition of the Latin translations. He attributed the translation of the *Rungs* to Geert Grote, though in fact it was by Willem Jordaens. The attribution of the translation of the *Stone* to Jordaens is unlikely, however. Jordaens' translation of the *Espousals* appeared in the form of an unpublished critical edition in the dissertation of Desoer (1977) and more recently in the series of the Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis by Schepers (2004). The translation by Geert Grote appeared in the same series (Hofman 2000). Uncertainty over the question of which of Ruusbroec's works was indeed translated by Grote and whether certain Latin translations should be attributed to Grote or Jordaens has given rise to numerous articles. While Kloosterman (1935) compares Surius and Geert Grote's translations of Ruusbroec's *Rungs*, Post (1950) concludes that Grote only translated the *Espousals* and not *The Seven Rungs*. Reypens (1950b) supports his argument concerning the style of translation with the conclusion that the only known Latin manuscript of the *Rungs* at the time was made by Jordaens.[26] Ampe (1975b), however, posits that Geert Grote did in fact translate the *Rungs*,

26 In passing, Reypens declares that everything Kloosterman states about Grote's style of translation is also applicable to Jordaens.

and that part of his translation appeared as an interpolation in a Latin manuscript of the *Espousals* (1975b).[27] Moreover, the researchers agree that Grote also translated Ruusbroec's *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*.[28] De Baere (1993) finds support for this perspective in his analysis of the translation of a series of important mystical terms. Jordaens' translation of *The Spiritual Tabernacle* has never been found. De Baere (1996a) convincingly argues that a partial translation in a manuscript in Vienna[29] is not derived from Jordaens. Another research question concerns the relationship between certain translations and certain groups of manuscripts. In this regard, Alaerts (1985) researched the influence of Geert Grote on the textual transmission of the *Espousals*, and De Baere (1989) investigated the relationship between Surius' translation of the *Enclosures* and a clearly delineated set of Middle Dutch manuscripts. This contribution also treats Surius' own explicit justification of his method as a translator.

The German textual traditions, consisting of Low and High German Ruusbroec manuscripts, have the same legacy as the Latin traditions: during Ruusbroec's own lifetime (in 1350), the *Espousals* and probably also the *Stone* were sent from Groenendaal to a group of *Gottesfreunde* (Friends of God) at Strasbourg, where a translation directly from Brabantine Middle Dutch was immediately undertaken. Eichler (1968b, 1969) published the critical edition of the *Stone* and the *Espousals* in the High German transmission. A number of studies preceded his work. Six hundred years after the reported dispatch from Groenendaal, Reypens (1950a) wrote about the lost and extant manuscripts and the value of the High German translation. Ruh (1964b) broadens the view of the manuscript transmission both with respect to quantity and quality and indicates the reciprocity of the source and target languages. He thus demonstrates that the divergence between the two languages was very small and that it was not so much a question of 'Übersetzung' as of 'Eindeutschung.' In the cases of Low German and Middle Frankish, this is not particularly surprising, but it is apparently also true of the High German tradition. In part, Eichler based his edition of the *Stone* on his own research into the textual transmission of the treatise (Eichler 1968a). His study of the transmission of the High German *Espousals* precedes the critical edition in the publication of his disser-

27 Ampe (1967) also demonstrates that Geert Grote was responsible for the translation of the work *The XII Virtues*, which was long ascribed to Ruusbroec.

28 Between Post (1950) and Reypens (1950b), who said nothing about the *Mirror*, and the general assumption of, among others the *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 130, the missing link has not been discovered hitherto.

29 Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, series nova 12.899.

tation (Eichler 1969). He indicates the hand of Rulmann Merswin on various levels of a fragmented or at least clearly layered transmission. On the basis of the manuscript transmission, Eichler (1992) illustrates a process in which translation slowly but surely made way for excerpting, compilation, and anonymous merging with additions and texts by the compiler or editor.

The English textual tradition is of a slightly later date. In 1957, Bazire & Colledge published two 15th-century English works which, either in whole or in part, stemmed from Ruusbroec via Latin translation: *The Chastising of God's Children* (a compilation work of which approximately one-third is based on the *Espousals*) and *The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God* (a relatively faithful translation of the *Stone*). In this edition, the editors leave open the possibility that the redactor of *The Chastising* had access to Jordaens' translation of the *Espousals*, but Ampe (1957c)[30] and De Soer (1959) demonstrate irrefutably that he used the Latin translation by Geert Grote. The *Treatise of Perfection*, in contrast, was based on Jordaens' translation. In an earlier article, Colledge (1952) had demonstrated this based on comparisons, and Sargent (1985) provides additional arguments. Sargent's article 'Ruusbroec in England: The *Chastising of God's Children and Related Works*' (Sargent 1983) reveals that with regard to compilation and translation, both works are a perfect illustration of two tendencies in late medieval devotional literature in England.

Literary Research

The subthemes of the literary research are: 1) General; 2) Composition, Textual Division and Style; 3) Imagery; and 4) Rhyming Prose

General

Although literary research into Ruusbroec's work has not been neglected to the same extent as research into the historical context, it is striking that it occupies such a limited place in Ruusbroec studies. In their contributions, Heyrman (1910) and Van Mierlo (1931, 1932c) list a great many aspects and characteristics in order to evaluate Ruusbroec as a prose writer, while Axters (1957) attempts to capture Ruusbroec's prose in one image, namely, of a Gothic cathedral. In a chronological and orderly overview, Noë (1984) provides statements and opinions on the literary value of Ruusbroec's work as they appear in literary histories and general introductions to Ruusbroec. Based on a comparison of Jan van Boendale, Warnar (1997b) demonstrates that in medieval literary theory,

30 With a considerable quantity of detailed criticism of the edition.

Ruusbroec was a veritable *auctor*, who was both an inspired author and a writer of traditional methods, but also a true master (Warnar 2005).

Composition, Textual Division and Style

A number of contributions focus on issues such as composition and textual division. Ampe (1945) researched the structure and order of the smaller textual units that may be distinguished in Ruusbroec's last work, *The XII Beguines*, concluding that the individual units display no inherent, organic continuity. Mertens (1990) demonstrates that the transmitted text of Ruusbroec's *Letters* correspond to the elements usually found in the epistolary genre in the Middle Ages. Ruusbroec's particularity lies in a device that he uses in the transition from the protocol (greeting, salutation, address) to the body of the letter proper (*narratio* and/or *petitio*). He repeatedly uses a gnomic statement, an aphorism or insight, with a conditional connecting sentence that contains the first *petitio* or petition. Willaert (1993b) connects the layered writing process of Ruusbroec's treatises, his posture and concentration mentioned by testimonies about him, and the composition of his texts. The important place of the *memoria* is discussed in this regard. The *Realm* applies structuring methods with which readers must have been familiar. Each time a new section begins, the reader is reminded of the general composition of the whole text. Concerning the *Espousals*, Willaert (1995) indicates that numerous transitional formulas occur in the text, which the author judiciously implements between the various sections of his exposition. This has a function in a situation in which the text is read in one continual reading or is read aloud. The place of the memory is also considerable in this respect. The conclusion that in writing the *Espousals* Ruusbroec probably had listeners rather than readers in mind casts a particular light on the structure and style of the treatise. It thus approximates the medieval sermon and the *artes praedicandi*. Ceulemans (2006) includes a detailed literary analysis of a passage from *The Spiritual Tabernacle* (the so-called *rationale* passage) in which the foundational biblical passage is allegorized and connected to various co-structuring elements. The role of the memory is crucial in this regard and Ruusbroec's approach betrays a didactic motivation.

The dissertation of W.C.A. Schilling, *Een proeve van stilistiek bij Ruusbroec 'den Wonderbare,'* which dates from 1930, contains a methodical approach that did not convince anyone. Later contributions on Ruusbroec's style express interest in the question of whether the articulation of the mystical experience produces a distinctive use of language. Mommaers (1981c, 1984b) writes on the limitations of language, while at the same time emphasizing that the mystical

experience can ony be expressed through reflection and language. Seynnaeve (1995) treats this issue on the basis of the Prologue of Brother Gerard. Swart (1995) points to the relationship between 'het vergezicht van de auteur en het ongeduld van de tekst' ('the author's vista and the impatience of the text').

Imagery

Schultz Zellmann (1983) researches the function of the mirror metaphor, highlighting that it has no normative significance, in contrast to its usual use in the Middle Ages. The metaphor of the mirror functions within a descriptive context. Ruusbroec's intention is to describe how something is, not how it should be.

Noë (1989) analyzes Ruusbroec's use of images in *The Realm of Lovers*. Images are ordered in series according to an internal coherence, to isotopes or paradigms that transcend the boundaries of the sentence, and determine a whole work or even several works. The paradigm of the cosmos and all its elements operate in various layers of the *Realm*. The dynamic entity of the cosmos provides the imagery for the natural powers of the human person (as a microcosm) and for the dynamism of mystical transformation. Another paradigm—that of the choirs of angels—is used to describe the mystic's path. Both paradigms display not only dynamisms that run in perfect parallel; they are, moreover, ingeniously intertwined. This research is expanded in Noë (2001); see also the summary in Noë (2002). This also involves the role of the memory: the imagery also has a mnemonic function. Ruusbroec develops six sets of images (cosmos, angels, feudalism, light, water, and space) parallel with the discursive structure of his treatise. On the one hand, the sensory nature of the text supports the operation of the images as a mnemonic tool, while on the other hand, the conjunction of memory and desire enable the transition to imageless union.

De Baere (1996b) investigates the metaphors related to food, food preparation, and morbid hunger (bulimia/*mengerael*) and the description of Christ as a voracious glutton (*ghieregh slockard*). Researchers often do not know what to make of these images, but Ruusbroec is well aware of the incomprehension his words may elicit: 'Even though my words sound wondrous, those who love understand me well' (*Al luden mine waerde wonderlec, die minnen verstaen mi wel*). Faesen (2001) analyzes the texts of Hadewijch and Ruusbroec that refer to an inverted tree: 'A tree with its root upward and its summit downwards' (*Een boem die hadde wortele op wert ende den tsop neder wert*). On nature as a metaphor more generally, see Warnar (2006). Noë (2010) provides a detailed discussion of the images of the little stone and/or the signet ring in *The Sparkling Stone*.

Rhymed Prose

Willaert (1993a) focuses on the rhymed prose and the verses Ruusbroec inserts at various places in his treatises.[31] He supposes that their distribution across Ruusbroec's various works is related to the range of readers Ruusbroec had in mind while writing. Rhymes are used most often in works that were probably written for a female audience. After sketching the various rhyme schemes, Willaert researches the function of the rhymes, specifically in *The Realm of Lovers*. Along with other means, the rhymes primarily serve to structure the text. Furthermore, rhyme is used to emphasize or summarize certain passages and underscore significant associations. Finally, the use of rhyme occasionally adopts an expressive value, especially when Ruusbroec aims to expose the reader to things that are ultimately unsayable.

Philosophical Research

Sassen (1940, 1948) places Ruusbroec's philosophical-theological insights within the Neo-Platonic tradition of scholasticism and focuses particularly on the Christianized form of exemplarism Augustine bequeathed to the Middle Ages. Although according to Hubbeling (1973), Ruusbroec 'was creatively active in forming technical scholastic language in Dutch and thus contributed to establishing Dutch philosophical terminology,' philosophical research has devoted little attention to Ruusbroec. Hubbeling himself lectured on 'logic and experience in Spinoza's and Ruusbroec's mysticism.'[32] He first presented a description of mystical ascent as expressed by Ruusbroec, and then treated Spinoza's classically logical method. His philosophy has an inherently mystical structure due to the fact that his conception of contemplating the world and one's own place within it *sub specie aeternitatis* has many parallels in mysticism. Among other things, he indicates the uncreated exemplar of the human person that appears as an idea of God in Ruusbroec's thought. Hoenen (1993) researched the relationship between the philosophical description of union with God as it appears in the work of Albert the Great based on the incorporation of great thinkers, and the *via mystica* as it is articulated in Ruusbroec's *Little Book of Enlightenment*. In addition to a number of differences, Hoenen

31 For an old article on 'Het vers en het berijmd proza in de werken van Jan van Ruusbroec,' see Meert (1891). See also Meert (1901).

32 This lecture is not, however, about logic when discussing Ruusbroec, or about experience when discussing Spinoza.

indicates striking similarities in the three stages on the path to union distinguished by the two authors.

Systematic-Theological Research

Since Gerson's objections to certain passages in the third book of the *Espousals* discredited Ruusbroec's orthodoxy, the question of whether his teaching contains pantheistic elements has been addressed several times over the course of a long reception history. Van de Walle (1938, 1939) analyzes the texts themselves in order to establish where they may have given rise to misunderstanding, concluding that Ruusbroec was in line with accepted theological frameworks, such as exemplarism, and with scholastic teaching on heavenly contemplation. Against this backdrop, he researches (Van de Walle 1939) the opinions of Gerson and Bossuet as serious critics and of Woutier d'Aygalliers and d'Asbeck as well-intentioned emanatory interpreters.

A second line within this field of research devotes attention to the theological system that is the basis of Ruusbroec's mystical thought. Wilkeshuis (1930) discusses the ethical and Christocentric elements in Ruusbroec's work as the living heart of his mysticism and as vital to his historical mission: combating the heresies of his time. A. Ampe's great, ambitious work *Kernproblemen uit de leer van Ruusbroec* is impressive. In the context of this project, he published *De grondlijnen van Ruusbroec's Drieëenheidsleer als onderbouw van den zieleopgang* (Ampe 1950a) and *De geestelijke grondslagen van den zieleopgang naar de leer van Ruusbroec*. The latter work was published in two volumes: *A. Schepping en christologie* (Ampe 1951) and *B. Genadeleer* (Ampe 1952). Ampe brings Ruusbroec's fragmented theological concepts—which the mystic only articulates when he judges it necessary to understand the mystical dynamic—together into one dovetailing system of thought. The concepts and doctrinal formulations are related to and tested against the Church Fathers, especially Augustine, and representatives of scholastic theology, namely Thomas Aquinas. Using aspects drawn from the different works of Ruusbroec's oeuvre, Ampe builds theological constructions, regularly appealing to assistance derived from Neo-Platonic schemes.

In two scientific monographs, which both exhibit a mixed research design, systematic theology comes to the fore as the applied framework. The first is the revision of a Habilitationsschrift[33] by Fraling (1974); the second a dissertation

33 Accepted in 1968 by the Theology Faculty of the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich.

by Bras (1993a). Fraling's study (*Mystik und Geschichte. Das 'ghemeyne leven' in der Lehre des Jan van Ruusbroec*) consists of two parts. Regarding the research question and methodology, the first part is a semantic study. In the second part, the author investigates the theological foundation of the *common life* in Ruusbroec and designs a spiritual and moral-theological doctrine. From God as the archetype of the *common life*, via God as the agent of the *common life* in salvation history, Fraling develops the theme of the constant actualization of God's act of salvation (common-being/*ghemeyn-sijn*) in the history and the life of the faithful. God's 'Lebensmitteilung' is of central importance as he causes the *common life* of the faithful. The dissertation by Bras (*Mint de minne: eros en agape bij Jan van Ruusbroec*) also has a mixed design. Systematic and spiritual theology are both represented, but this does not result in a study in two parts, as in the case of Fraling. As a result of its framework and main intention, the systematic-theological approach comes to the fore most strongly.[34] An investigation into the relationship between *eros* and *agape* in the *Espousals* clarifies another association, namely, between certain movements in Protestant theology and mysticism. Following an overview of the Protestant critique of mysticism (Heppe, Ritschl, Harnack, Brunner, Gogarten, and Barth), the author treats the themes of *eros* and *agape* in the work of Protestant theologian Anders Nygren. According to Bras, the benefit of researching this association in Ruusbroec and the *Espousals* lies in 'the representative character of his mystical teaching, the great influence of his thought, the monumental structure of his work and the great significance of love within it.'[35] Bras then treats the *Espousals* and its structuring of the active, inner, and contemplative lives, integrating evaluative passages at each transitional point that discuss the transformative process, the dynamizing structural elements, and the meaning of *eros* and *agape*. Based on these recurring moments, the penultimate chapter concisely considers the theme of *eros* and *agape* in the *Espousals*. The last chapter again treats the relationship between mysticism and Protestant theology. In addition to studies tending toward the systemic-theological, the dissertation by Cook (2000) on Ruusbroec's 'erotic theology' as a radicalization of the Cistercian spiritual tradition is interwoven with an Eckhart-inspired 'essential radicalism,' which is premised on the idea that the state and the quality of God's being and our being is fundamentally identical.

Furthermore, there is a clear systematic-theological line of research in the studies of R. Van Nieuwenhove. On the one hand, the author seeks to associate Ruusbroec with a primarily Franciscan inspiration concerning his theological

34 The other aspect is discussed under the heading of spiritual theology.

35 Bras (1993), p. 51.

insights (Van Nieuwenhove 2001a, 2001b); on the other, he attempts to demonstrate that Ruusbroec should be considered an apophatic theologian rather than a phenomenologist of the mystical experience (Van Nieuwenhove 2000b, 2003, 2005). He accords a central role to Ruusbroec's thought on the Trinity (Van Nieuwenhove 2000a, 2001a, 2003, 2008).

Theological-Spiritual Research

We distinguish four subthemes within this research field: 1) Studies on Mystical Development or on Ruusbroec's Mystical Teaching; 2) Mystical Themes; 3) Mystical Terminology; and 4) Research in Comparative Spirituality.

Mystical Development/Mystical Teaching

Where current researchers subject certain issues to closer study and problematize the obvious, the merit of the very first scholars is that they explored Ruusbroec's as-of-yet-unknown teaching, summarizing it in whole or in part, distinguishing principal from secondary elements, and introducing parameters for later studies. Such pioneering work was conducted by Auger (1892),[36] who deserves an honorable mention in this regard.

For the commemorative volume published on the occasion of the 550th anniversary of Ruusbroec's death, Reypens (1931a) wrote a contribution in which he brought Ruusbroec's most characteristic traits to the fore in one view: *mysticism of turning inward*, with an *exemplarist* foundation, and crowned with a *common life*.[37] The author underscores the vital connections between these characteristics and the way they are related. The tripartite nature of this synthesis is more than simply an allusion to the Trinity. According to Reypens, the core of Ruusbroec's mystical teaching is Trinitarian. The psychological basis of mystical ascent is as such a mirror of the Trinity, and 'the contemplative and joyful participation in God's Trinitarian life' is the crowning of the mystical life. Reypens develops each of the aforementioned elements in a Trinitarian way: the exemplarist element as rooted in the teaching on the Trinity, turning inward on the basis of the reflecting structure of the soul, and the *common*

36 Otterloo (1874) and Dolezich (1921, 1924, 1926) do not evince the qualities displayed by Auger. Ampe (1975, p. 560), does, however, describe Otterloo's book as the 'first fruit of David's edition' of Ruusbroec's works. See the judgement on Dolezich (1926) in Van Mierlo (1926a).

37 For the history of the theory of turning inward, see Reypens (1932c). Reypens (1932a) is less analytic.

life as an expression of uniformity with the contemplative Trinitarian life. This article by Reypens is the first study devoted entirely to Ruusbroec's mystical teaching and an attempt to present a synthesis in one movement. In both the articles P. Henry (1952, 1953) devoted to 'La mystique trinitaire du bienheureux Jean Ruusbroec,' he also opts to take the mystic's Trinitarian thought as the premise and core of his reflections. Henry bases his analysis of Ruusbroec's doctrine of God on four fundamental oppositions: between being and activity, unity and multiplicity, isolation within the self and being formed (linked to the opposition ineffable-effable), emanation and return. In addition to the 'doctrine of God,' Henry also exposes these oppositions—which are however, also complementary and even simultaneous from an ontological perspective—in Ruusbroec's conception of the structure of the human soul and his description of the mystical path. Both the two poles of the mystical relationship as well as the mystical encounter and the stages on the path that leads to it are Trinitarian in nature. Louis Dupré (1984) also takes reflection on the Trinity as the basic premise of his introduction to Ruusbroec (*The Common Life*), focusing on the origins and early Christian development of this thought and on the place in the spiritual and mystical life that Ruusbroec accords to the Trinitarian dynamic.

As a completion to the series 'Kernproblemen uit de leer van Ruusbroec,' of which we discussed the first two volumes as systematic-theological studies, A. Ampe published his book *De mystieke leer van Ruusbroec over den zieleopgang* in 1957. The author himself describes the relationship between the previous volumes and this work as follows:

> In contrast to this static analysis, we now intend to examine how Ruusbroec develops the metaphysical dynamism of the human person in the conquest of its final goal, namely, the gradual fulfillment of union and uniformity with the Triune God, from which it flowed forth and to which it must ultimately flow back in knowledge and love.[38]

Following a chapter on the divisions in the perfected life, Ampe treats the soul's ascent in three steps: that of the active, the inner, and the contemplative life. For a substantial part of his book, he takes Ruusbroec's work as one great synopsis. For the contemplative life, however, the author bases his study on various editorial schemes and other particularities of Ruusbroec's diverse works.

In two articles published in the *American Benedictine Review*, Teasdale (1984) also provides a general perspective on 'Ruysbroeck's Mystical Theology,' in which he explains Ruusbroec's thought based on three essential categories

38 Ampe (1957a), p. v.

of God, the human person, and the spiritual life. See also De Letter (1961), Schirpenbach (1996), and McGinn (2006). Boon (2003) places Ruusbroec's Trinitarian mysticism in line with Hadewijch's 'Trinitarian language of love.' A dissertation by Uyttenhove (2008) is intended to establish a reunion of theology and mysticism. The author investigates the tenability of the position that Ruusbroec does not see a fundamental difference between God's Trinitarian life of love within himself and God's life of love relative to humanity. She discusses Ruusbroec's Trinitarian theology in his works (most extensively in *The Realm of Lovers, The Spiritual Espousals, The Spiritual Tabernacle, The Seven Rungs*, and *The XII Beguines*), highlights the relationship between Ruusbroec's mystical theology and two earlier mystical authors (William of Saint-Thierry and Hadewijch), and reflects on the contemporary relevance of Ruusbroec's Trinitarian thought. For this latter reflection, she reads Ruusbroec 'in dialogue' with an author who is considered to be one of the most important exponents of renewed theological thought on the Trinity: Catherine Mowry LaCugna.

Of the following six studies, we may say that they are not intended to present a comprehensive sketch of Ruusbroec's mystical teaching, and yet their approach is more than merely aspectual. In 1967, B. Fraling published *Der Mensch vor dem Geheimnis Gottes. Untersuchungen zur geistlichen Lehre des Jan van Ruusbroec*.[39] The book is primarily an attempt to distinguish and bring together the basic preconditions for the encounter with the Secret in the texts of the *Espousals*. The author then treats the two central ideas with which Ruusbroec discusses the relationship between the human person and the ever-secretive center of its own being: the frameworks of his Creation theology and Trinitarian thought. In this regard, Fraling is particularly interested in Ruusbroec's dialectical form of expression as a way in which the author brings the reader closer to the Secret of God. A second such publication is the well-known book by P. Mommaers entitled *Waar naartoe is nu de gloed van de liefde. Fenomenologie van de liefdegemeenschap volgens de mysticus Ruusbroec* (1973). Mommaers does not attempt to (re)construct a system beneath Ruusbroec's texts, but he aims to bring Ruusbroec's phenomenological statements to the fore and thereby strengthen them. He does so on the basis of passages from all the works. The author demonstrates that in Ruusbroec's thought, being one with the Other is an interaction of various elements. A summarizing passage of the *Stone* describes the following four movements: ascent, presence, union, and unity. Mommaers focuses particularly on the aspects of union and unity. Life within the Triune God is an example illustrating the experience of unity with God. The Trinity is also a model of the human person itself: the person is 'being' and 'individuality' ('self' and 'personality'). Union and unity

39 This book is the edited version of his dissertation defended in 1962.

are fundamentally concerned with the relationship between uniformity and unity. Regarding complete being-in-God, Mommaers highlights the importance of enjoyment in the experience of unity. A relationship with the desire for union remains, but from above to below: 'the retroactive power of the highest moment to the lower.'[40] The fact that Ruusbroec expresses the experience of unity so strongly by no means undermines his awareness of the enduring otherness of God. The polarity between God and the human person continues to exist even within the most perfect unity. The fourth study in this field is the dissertation by K. Bras.[41] His research into *Eros* and *Agape* in John of Ruusbroec is also a spiritual-theological study, and it focuses on *The Spiritual Espousals*. Bras approaches Ruusbroec's mystical teaching 'as a structure of dynamic interacting elements that describe a transformative mystical development.' He aims to demonstrate 'the building blocks from which this structure is built, how they support and cooperate with each other, and the inherent dynamism they possess.'[42] In his dissertation, Swart (2006) provides a commentary of *The Spiritual Espousals* that discusses the text of the *Espousals* as it develops section by section, paragraph by paragraph, and passage by passage. He then systematically researches the articulation of mystical transformation in the *Espousals*. In the first step, the blueprint of the work is exposed using an armamentarium of literary theory—that of semiotic analysis. The author then investigates the forms that betray the presence of a narrative subject. This expostulatory voice may be observed in internal-expostulation references, revealing the situation of communication, commentating and qualifying expressions, and expostulation markers. In some instances, the expostulatory voice comes to the fore even more clearly as an addresser, and as an addresser who summons an addressee. The author researches the active words of this addresser and addressee, forming the basis of the final chapter, which treats the mystagogical and communicative setting of the *Espousals*. The dissertation of Pyong-Gwan Pak (2008)—briefly mentioned in the section of Ruusbroec's sources—also researches Ruusbroec's mystical thought, though the author prefers terms such as 'vernacular, mystical theology' and 'theological practices.' He opts for a hermeneutical approach, devoting great attention to contextual factors, namely, the Western theological tradition and heretical movements that were oriented toward the mystical, rather than a phenomenological, approach and the principle of Ruusbroec *sui interpres*. Pak concludes that the vernacular author's most important concern is not theoretical, as in scholastic

40 Mommaers (1973, 90).

41 Bras (1993). This study was mentioned above in the discussion of systematic-theological research (1.7).

42 Bras (1993), p. 57.

theology, but practical. Ruusbroec's work has a fundamentally mystagogical intent as a spiritual guide that offers both a mystical perspective as well as practical, ascetic-contemplative wisdom. Ruusbroec is not concerned merely with the description of experiences; rather, he interweaves experiential and interpretative elements in order to create a coherent and convincing vision of spiritual life.

In addition to the aforementioned books, a number of articles have also been devoted to Ruusbroec's mystical teaching or the mystical development he describes. Each in his own way, Reypens (1922) and Koehler (1964) research the characteristics of the highest form of mystical contemplation. The former speaks of 'vision de l'essence divine,' the latter of *fruitio Dei*. Reypens (1938a) devotes an article to the significance of the *gherinen* and the possibility and place of natural mysticism. Boeckmans (1980) and Mommaers (1995b) also focus on the relationship between natural and supernatural turning inward. Both in his book *Waar naartoe is nu de gloed van de liefde?* and in a number of articles, Mommaers is less concerned with mystical teaching than with questions raised by the phenomenon of the mystical encounter. The author posits that being one is a complex reality: the enduring interplay of various moments, of being distinct and yet one (Mommaers 1976), an organic dynamism (*living life*) of 'union' and 'unity' (Mommaers 1981a), which increasingly involves the whole human person, in an increasingly integrated way (Mommaers 1981b).[43] Focusing on three central concepts in *The Little Book of Enlightenment*, Mommaers (1981d) clarifies the dynamic-structural entity of the encounter with God by explaining the meaning and relationship between the central concepts of the *Little Book* (union with God *with means, without means*, and *without difference*). See also De Baere (1984b). Blommestijn's (1987, 1990, 1992) commentary on a passage from *The Sparkling Stone* (about the hired servant, the faithful servant, the intimate friend, and the hidden son) is also premised on 'the process of encounter with love.' He is apparently less interested in the distinct moments of this process than in the inviting movement of the text itself in which the dynamism of this growth process is developed: 'Ruusbroec does not provide us with any "information" about the nature of the mystical experience, but in its literary development, the mystical text presents the transformative mystical process step by step.'[44] Blommestijn considers the polar structure of the contrast as a linguistic tool that moves the reader and sets out the course of his/her spiritual journey. Based on the *Espousals*, Zhang (1998) discusses three aspects of the mystical encounter: natural potential, the

43 See also Mommaers (2009 a+b).

44 Blommestijn (1990), p. 83.

intrusive character of love, and the richness accompanied by ever-renewed love are opposed elements that are experienced simultaneously.

Finally, we must mention a number of authors who assist their readers in following the mystical process Ruusbroec describes, using one particular work, such as *The Spiritual Tabernacle* (Van Cranenburgh 1992) or *The Seven Rungs* (Blijlevens 2011).

Mystical Themes in Ruusbroec's Work

Peeters (1981) published an article concerning 'The great themes of Ruusbroec's mysticism,' indicating two: 'losing the self and becoming one with the Other' and 'the common person.' The former denotes a fundamental dynamic found throughout Ruusbroec's work but never named as such; the latter a Ruusbroecian concept describing the former's fulfillment. The thematic approach in Ruusbroec studies may more or less be divided analogously according to this distinction. Various studies are devoted to themes that do not stem from one single concept in Ruusbroec's works: the 'night of the spirit' (Reypens 1938b), the relationship between mystical experience and 'concrete, efficient action' (Mommaers 1975), friendship (Vekeman 1984), and nuptial mysticism (Rocquet 2004). Another series discusses themes that are named as such in Ruusbroec's works: the *common life* (Auger 1895; O'Sheridan 1928/1929), humility (Bergen 1937), the elevation of the spirit (Smits van Waesberghe 1945), freedom and humility (Ampe 1956), the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Baers 1960, Vekeman 2002), pure intention (Moereels 1977a, 1977b), the birth of the Son in the soul (Wiseman 1991a), freedom (Wiseman 1991b), justice (Van Cranenburgh 1993, 1994), hell (Rolfson 2010), and encounter (Zhang 1998, 1999). Furthermore, other studies concern a certain aspect of Ruusbroec's work, such as Ruusbroec's anthropological conception (Ampe 1957b; Moereels 1978; and Verdeyen 1993a, 1993b) or 'maternal mysticism' (Rocquet 2004).

Mystical Terminology

Crean (1967; see also Crean 1969, 1970) researches six series of mystical terms that occur in both Eckhart and Ruusbroec, namely, to contemplate, to know, to desire, to turn, to flow, and to image (*schouwen, kennen, geren, keren, vlieten–vloeyen*, and *beelden*) and their Middle High German variants. Employing a uniform philological method, the author compares the manner in which Ruusbroec and Eckhart use these terms. He concludes that Ruusbroec develops the basic terms in more supple ways, resulting in a greater diversity of forms. Ruusbroec displays a broader semantic variety with most of the terms. According to the researcher, Eckhart's frequent abstract word forms appeal especially to the intellect, while Ruusbroec provides clear sensory images in order to move his readers to a mental and faithful response.

In 1972, J. Alaerts[45] obtained his doctorate with a semantic study of 'essential terminology' in *The Realm of Lovers, The Spiritual Espousals*, and *The Little Book of Enlightenment*. This research may be considered to be an exhaustive support of the conclusion A. Deblaere formulated in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* in the entry 'Essentiel (superessentiel, suressentiel)' concerning the use and meaning of essential terminology (Deblaere 1961). Alaerts' method consists of two steps. The first is analytic. For each section, the author reproduces the complete passage in which the terms 'essence,' 'essential,' 'essentiality,' 'super-essence,' 'super-essential,' or 'super-essentiality' (*wesen, weselijc, weselijcheit, overwesen, overweselijc*, or *overweselijcheit*) occur. After localizing the passage in the book, the author provides a concise description of the context or opposition in which it is used (use), after which he provides a provisional definition (meaning). The second step synthesizes. By bringing together passages or sections of passages that display the same meaning, the author attempts to establish a nuanced interpretation of the terminology. Alaerts thus indicates five areas in which essential terminology is used. He concludes that these terms are not principally applicable to philosophical structures and that the 'essential' indicates not an object but a quality of contemplation (Alaerts 1973).[46]

The dissertation of J.A. Wiseman on *minne* in *The Spiritual Espousals* dates from 1979. Wiseman does not research the meaning and use of *minne* in the order in which the term appears. In the first part of his study, he researches the term insofar as it is used in texts about the Trinity and about God's orientation towards creation. To the extent that this concerns the Incarnation and salvific activity of Christ, he also implicates the term 'charity.' In the second part, he researches *minne* within the context of the human response to the divine love in, consecutively, the active, the inner, and the contemplative life. This also involves the terms 'charity' and 'love.' In the third part, the author provides a concluding synthesis of *love* in the *Espousals*. The three most important areas of use are: 1) the Holy Spirit as *minne*; 2) *minne* as the fundamental disposition of God towards humankind; and 3) *minne* as a reality created by God in the human person. Wiseman connects the discussion of the latter point with a 'threefold dialectic' that appears a number of times in the *Espousals*. The first moment in this regard is common love and charity, which is operative in the outflowing movement to other creatures. This common love is a reflection of God's own outflowing to the whole of creation and reflects his universal goodness. The second moment is the inner love (*innighe minne*), or the movement of our spirit back to God. Inwardness here has a strong connotation of ardor, active on the level of the heart, of the higher faculties, and of unity of spirit. In the final

45 Alaerts (1973).

46 See also Alaerts (1969a), (1969b), (1975b), and (1975c).

aspect of this movement (the storm of love), love is overwhelmed in its striving. God's touch and our striving in love become one simple love. This leads to the third moment: enjoyed love (*ghebrukelijcke minne*). The most profound experience of this love is that of the loving contemplator (*minnende scouwere*) because the contemplative is drawn up into the *loving* embrace through the Holy Spirit, in an experience of unity that consists solely of eternal rest in an enjoyable embrace of loving transport (*omvanghe minlijcker ontvlotentheit*). Our love is completely drawn up into the most intimate of the experienced unities with the divine love. From this, Wiseman concludes that the most fundamental aspect of love in all its forms is the unifying aspect. For a summary, see Wiseman (1984).

A third dissertation (1988) is that of J. Bonny about the *common life*. The author discusses all the places in *The Realm of Lovers, The Spiritual Espousals*, and *The Sparkling Stone* in which the term 'common' occurs. Each work is read in its entirety, and attention is devoted to the growth and development it describes, which instills each passage with its particular function and meaning. Three aspects are distinguished and further clarified in each passage: 1) the *location* of the passage in the general structure of the work; 2) the *use* of the conceptual context in which the concept analyzed is used: opposing or parallel terms, clarifying expressions, referenced causes or consequences; and 3) the *meaning* of the analyzed term in the context at hand, to the extent that it allows itself to be described therein. Each section closes with a conclusion, while the study as a whole closes with a series of 'Conclusions' in which the central lines from the abundance of information are brought together and combined in one profile: that of the 'common life' or of the 'common person.' In Bonny (2004), the author recapitulates a number of paragraphs from his dissertation regarding the terms *distinction* and *otherness*.

Fraling's book (1974) *Mystik und Geschichte. Das 'ghemeyne leven' in der Lehre des Jan van Ruusbroec* has been referenced as a systematic-theological study. The theological part is preceded by a study of terminology. This semantic approach is intended to analyze the general and specific meaning of the term 'common' in Ruusbroec's works. Furthermore, Fraling investigates the three aspects in which the term functions: oriented outward, in conjunction with terms related to interiority, and in relation to the concept of *minne*.

A number of articles are also intended to clarify and contextualize Ruusbroec's terms. Groot (1987) provides a complete semantic overview of the terms related to 'turning inward' and 'turning outward' in Ruusbroec's writings (turning inwards/turning outwards, going in/going out, flowing in/flowing out, and inwards/outwards (*inkeeren / utekeeren, ingaen/utegaan, invloeyen / utevloeyen*, and *inwert/uutwert*), preceded by a synthesis. Following this article,

De Baere (1995) provides a more detailed analysis of the way in which the word pairs turning inwards/turning outwards (*inkeeren/utekeeren*) and flowing in/flowing out (*invloeyen/utevloeyen*) function in the *Espousals*. The author demonstrates how Ruusbroec transcends symmetry and allows the interplay to be determined by the basic expressions of movement to turn (*keeren*) and to flow (*vloeyen*) and the adverbs or prepositions in and out (*in* and *ute*). The terms 'turning inwards' (*inkeeren*) and 'flowing outwards' (*utevloeyen*) both function in a threefold context: that of mystical experience, of the natural relationship between the human person and God, and of the inter-Trinitarian life. Ruusbroec develops his mystical terminology using extremely flexible combinations. In a series of articles, Paul Mommaers (1995c, 1996, 1997) researches the terms 'to ascend' (*opgaen*) and 'to descend' (*nedergaen*) in Ruusbroec's works. The author highlights the use of opposite movements (contrary in her works/*contrarie in haren werken*) which nevertheless strike at one another and thus intensify one another (always inseparate/*altoes onghesceden*). The fact that they are both related to union with God may be explained by their equal nobility (*edelheit*). And yet, Ruusbroec places particular emphasis on descent (*nedergaen*) and lowliness (*nederheit*) because humility is the foundation of union. The predominance of depth and descent (*nedergaen*) is also evident in the articulation of the contemplative experience of God. A study by Swart (2010) focuses on the *Espousals*' specific articulation of mystical knowledge and experience that is contained in the terms to contemplate, to enjoy, and to taste (*scouwen, ghebruken*, and *smaken*).

Research in Comparative Spirituality

Comparative Ruusbroec research is conducted in two fields. First, researchers focus on similarities and differences between Ruusbroec's mystical teaching and that of other mystical authors. For example, Reypens (1931c) relates John of the Cross to Ruusbroec and indicates 'Their correspondence concerning the highest point of contemplation.' He finds this correspondence in three points: 1) the conception that the highest mystical union is a participation in the life of the Triune God, 2) that according to the mystic, this life differs fundamentally from the way the blessed experience it, 3) while the way it differs fundamentally is described unequivocally.[47] In a different way, Brandsma (1931) demonstrates the similarity between Ruusbroec and Teresa of Avila concerning the

47 Huijben (1932) disagrees with the article by Reypens. His rejection, however, concerns not the aforementioned correspondence between Ruusbroec and John of the Cross but Reypens' underlying assumption and formulation concerning the immediate contemplation of the divine Being.

'Growth and Flowering of the Mystical Life.' Ruusbroec is also often compared to Meister Eckhart. They are mentioned in the same breath, as kindred spirits, or as the most prominent representatives of so-called Rhineland mysticism. Van Nieuwenhove (1998), however, was the first researcher to subject their doctrinal relationship to a detailed study. He demonstrates that their partially corresponding vocabulary actually masks two very different theologies. Not only do their conceptions of the Trinity and doctrines of grace lead to fundamentally different views, but also the Christology that is so central to Ruusbroec's thought is almost completely absent from Eckhart. Van Nieuwenhove indicates Ruusbroec's original contribution to Trinitarian theology, which he localizes in the notion of *regiratio* and the role of the Spirit in it as the active *principium diligendi*, a matter in which Ruusbroec also differs from spiritual theologians such as Richard of Saint-Victor and Bonaventure.

In addition to the comparison with other spiritual writers, research has also been conducted into the possible similarities between Ruusbroec's spirituality and elements in other religious traditions. Haag (1991) associates objectless meditation as it is practiced in the Zen Buddhist tradition with Ruusbroec's mysticism. Mommaers & Van Bragt (1995) also place 'Ruusbroec in dialogue with the East.' In the first part, the authors focus on the actual nature of mysticism, treating the predominant characteristics of the mystical experience, among other things. Mommaers provides a detailed explanation of Ruusbroec's use of words, modes of thought, and theology, while Van Bragt responds based on Japanese Zen Buddhism but also with references to other Buddhist forms and Hinduism. In the second part, Ruusbroec's anthropology and mysticism are compared to the Buddhist conception of the human person and of the transcendent. The third part provides a detailed investigation of so-called natural mysticism and Ruusbroec's condemnation of the Quietists, and then questions their relationship to a Buddhist perspective.

Occasionally, comparative research is concerned with mystical terminology. See the study by Crean (1967; see also Crean 1969, 1970) under that heading above. Compare also the study by Schmitt-Fiack (1972) on *Wise und wisheit bei Eckhart, Tauler, Seuse und Ruusbroec*. Finally, we must mention the contribution—transcending the boundaries of time and space—by López-Baralt (2004) on the *overwesen* of the soul in Ruusbroec, the 'heart' in John of the Cross, and the *qalb* in Ibn 'Arabi.

Appendices

Middle Dutch Texts Related to Ruusbroec Translated by John Arblaster

Appendix One: Pseudo-Hadewijch[1]

In his works, Ruusbroec often alludes to, and occasionally even literally quotes, a number of poems. The poems are by an anonymous author now generally known as Pseudo-Hadewijch (due to a false attribution by Jozef Van Mierlo in his 1912 edition of Hadewijch's works, which he corrected in his 1952 edition). They were transmitted in a number of manuscripts (some of which originated at the Charterhouse of Herne), of which two also contain works by Hadewijch herself. The name Pseudo-Hadewijch is somewhat misleading, as the content of the poems bears closer similarity to the works of Marguerite Porete and John of Ruusbroec than to Hadewijch herself. A brief discussion of the poems is provided in the first article in this volume.

Gedicht Zeventien	**Poem Seventeen**
Mi en pijnt	It pains me not
Noch en gherijnt	Nor moves me
Dat ik moet dichten,	To rhyme
Daer hi die levet	Since he who lives
Bi ons gevet	With us gives
Sine ghichten,	His gifts,
Ende met nuwer mare	And with new tidings
Ute sinen clare	By his brilliance

1 All the poems are translated from the Middle Dutch text as published by Jozef Van Mierlo in Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952). Poem Seventeen is on pp. 87–91. I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable advice and assistance of Benedictus Arblaster and Rob Faesen in the translation of these poems. The translation of these poems is by no means faultless, which is perhaps not a surprise since they have been described by Edmund Colledge, Jack C. Marler, and Judith Grant as 'hard to interpret and almost impossible to translate.' See Porette, *Mirror* (1999), p. li. My translation of gendered nouns in Middle Dutch may especially cause confusion. *Minne* is feminine in Middle Dutch, but 'love' is almost exclusively neuter here, except in cases where it seemed untenable (see, e.g., Poem Twenty-Four, where Love is personified as the landlady of a tavern). The Soul is depicted almost exclusively as masculine in the Middle Dutch poems, but since I interpret references to the soul to be general reference to 'a human being,' I have either pluralized or neutralized the nouns.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2014 | DOI 10.1163/9789004270763_013

Ons wilt verlichten.
Hi si ghebenedijt
In alre tijt
In alle anesichten.

He enlightens us.
Blessed be he
In all times,
In all ways.

In kinnen bloet
Al eest groet
Dat mens vercrighet,
Het schijnt alse niet
Alse men besiet
Dat daer ontblivet.

Of pure knowledge
What one receives
Is great,
But seems as naught
When one perceives
Its lack.

Men moet crighen
In dat ontbliven
Saelt sijn goet,
Ochte het est te clene
Algader reyne
Wat datmen doet.

One must fight
In this deficiency
And it will right;
Else what one does
All in all,
Is too small.

Die in dat hoghe kinnen
Der bloter minnen
Waerdeloes
Diepere crighen
Venden haere ontbliven
Meere altoes.

In that high knowledge
Of pure love,
Wordlessly
Striving deeper,
We may evermore find
What we lack.

Nuwe mare
In doncker clare
Vinden si,
Van hoghen prise
Sonder wise
In verre bi.

In dark clarity
We find
Modeless
New tidings
Of great value
In the far-near.

In dat eweghe wide
In allen side
Sonder inden
Werdet si ghedeilt,
Ghebreidet, gheheilt
In een verslinden:

In the eternal expanse,
—Without end,
On every side—
They are unfurled,
Broadened and healed
By being consumed:

Die ghedachte
In stilre jachte
Die dat onghemeten
Al in al
Venden sal
Al ombegrepen.

Thought,
In silent hunt,
Will find
This endless
'All in All'
Ungraspable.

Daer dunct hare baren
Sonder verclaren
Een simpel iet,
Alse in vertien;
Doch moet sijs lien
In een bloet niet.

There it seems to her,
Inexplicably
A "simple something" is born
And though short-lived,
Must be affirmed
In a bare nothing.

In dat bloete
Staen die groete
Die vercrighen
In hare in sien,
In sijn ontvlien
Hare ontbliven.

In that bareness
Stand the great [souls]
Who receive
—In their vision;
In its vanishing—
What they lack.

Wat mens vercrighet
Vore dats ontblivet
Sekerlike
Also ic meine
Dats alte cleine
Te enegher ghelike.

What is received,
Relative to what is lacking
Is surely,
I am convinced,
Too small
To compare.

Bi dies sijn si ga
Ende volghen na
Die dit bekinnen,
Die donckere pade
Buten rade
Altoes van binnen.

At this they rejoice,
Those who confess it,
And they follow
The dark ways,
Beyond reason,
Ever within.

Dat hen meest cost
Ende hen best lost
Dats dit ontbliven.
Maer hoe dat es

What costs them most
And frees them best
Is this lack.
But how that may be

Dies sijt ghewes:	—Assuredly!—
Men en maechs niet scriven.	Is ineffable.
Maer redenen storme	But reason's storm
Ende beelden vorme	And image's form
Moet men af gaen,	Must be discarded
Sal men van binnen	If one is inwardly
Des iet kinnen	To know of it
Sonder verstaen.	Without understanding.
Die niet en geroen	Those unsatisfied
In ander doen	In doing other
Dan hier es gheseit,	Than described here,
Si eneghen hen	Unite themselves
In hare ierste beghin	In their first beginning
In die ewicheit.	In eternity.
Daer werdense in	There they become
Hare ierste beghin	So one with him
Met hem so een	In their first beginning
Dat en mach ghelike	That upon the earth
In eertrike	There can no two
So sijn van tween.	So similar.
In die naheyt	In the closeness
Der enicheit	Of the union
Sijn selke pure	Such pure ones
Binnen altoes	Are inwardly ever
Bloet beeldeloes	Bare, imageless,
Sonder figuere;	Without figures,
Alse gevrijt	As made free
In eweghen tijt	In eternal time,
Onghescepen	Uncreated,
In stille wijt	In a silent breadth,
Sonder crijt	Unbordered,
Onbegrepen.	Ungrasped.
Ic en vinder in	Therein I can find
Meer inde noch beghin	Neither end nor beginning
Noch ghene ghelike,	And no comparison

Daer ik woert
Af mach brenghen voert
Volcomeleke.

Ic wilt hier op gheven
Hen diet leven
In hare bekeer;
Het mocht dat inneghen dincken
Die tonghe vermincken,
Sprake siere of mere.

Gedicht Achttien
Maer nu hoert dat ghebod
Dat ons god
Doet bekinnen:
Hoe wine met crachte
Uut alre gedachten
Selen minnen.

Met minnen crachte
Moet die ghedachte
Haers selvesheyt
Sijn ontwrongen
Ende verswongen
In overstheyt.

Daer wertse gheleydet
Ghewidet, ghebreydet,
In deemsteren weghe,
Ende verresen
In hoghe wesen
In gracien seghe.

Dit moet sijn bestaen
Met herten ende voldaen
Ute alre crachte,
Daer men mint gode
Na den meesten ghebode
Ute alre ghedachte.

About which
I can utter
A single perfect word.

Here I will leave this
To those who live thus,
Interiorly;
To speak anymore
Of those intimate thoughts
Might cripple the tongue.

Poem Eighteen[2]
But now hear the command
That God makes
Us confess:
How we shall love him
With all our strength
And all our mind.

Through love's power
The mind
From itself
Must be wrested
And enraptured
Into the highest.

There she is led,
—Widened, broadened—
Along dark paths
And raised
Into high being,
In the victory of grace.

This can only be dared
With passion, and fulfilled
With all one's strength,
Loving God
To the highest command,
With all one's mind.

2 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 94–98.

Die criekel der dinghe
Moet werden inghe
Ende te niete gheleidet,
Sal die criekel bloot
Werden wijt ende groet
In al ghebreidet.

The circle of things
Must become small
And brought to naught,
If the pure circle
—large and wide—
Is to broaden in all.

Die ghedachte in god
Es der minnen slod
In die enecheyt
Daer se minne heeft gheleydet
Ghewidet, ghebreydet
In dies lichs claerheyt.

The mind in God
Is the enclosure of love
In that union
To which love has led her
—widened and broadened her—
In the light of that clarity.

Het behoert den edelen puren
Dat si daer duren
Ende niemenne el
Ende hem quite
Van onghelike
Houden wel.

The privilege of the noble pure
And of none other
Is to remain there
And wholly
Keep themselves
From lesser things.

Want dat edele lecht
Ghevet sijn berecht
Sonderlinghe
Na sijn rueken,
Daer ne hevet gheen sueken
Redenne noch meyninghe.

Because the noble light
Utters his message
Solely when
He so chooses;
It is futile to search there
With reason or opinion.

Men moetse buten
Verre sluten
Ende binnen staen
In .i. bloet stille
Puer sonder wille
Ende also ontfaen

One must keep them
Far outside
And stand within
In a bare silence
—Purely, without will—
And accept thus

Die edelheit
Die ongheseyt
Blivet metter tonghen,
Een nuwe verstaen
Noeyt eer ontfaen
Ute dien oerspronghen.

The nobility
That tongues
Have not spoken;
A new understanding,
Never before received
From that source.

Ay, hi es uwe
Altoes nuwe,
Edele ghedachte,
Daer ghi inne ontdaen
Sijt ende ghevaen
Met susseghedaenre iachte.

O, he is yours,
Always new,
Noble mind,
In which you are freed
And caught,
By such a hunt.

Nu blivet daer
Sonder vaer,
Het es uwe ghewin,
Sijt blide
Te eweghen tide
In u beghin,

Stay there now
And fear not,
It is your gain.
Be joyful
Forever
In your beginning

Daer ghi inne altoes
Gheleidet indeloes
Wert sonder keren
Daer en mach in hoghe verstaen
Noch diepe ingaen
Anckeren no meren.

Into which you are always
Led endlessly,
Without turning;
Therein neither high nor deep
Understanding can enter,
Moor or anchor.

Dies ons in ezechiele
Den prophete vele
Die .iiij. diere leerden
Die vortwert ghinghen
In derre bloetinghen
Ende niet en keerden.

Of this we learned much
From the four animals in
The Prophet Ezekiel,
Which went forward
Into this purification,
Never turning.

Datse ons leerden
Hoe si keerden
Alse ginghen,
Dat es inder minnen
Die der redennen kinnen
Toe mach bringhen.

If they had taught us
How they turned
As they went:
It may have led
To the love
Known by reason.

Maer besiet:
Si en keerden niet
In hare voert gaen,
Dat is inder bloetheyt
Der enecheyt
Boven verstaen.

But consider:
They did not turn
In their procession:
It is in the purity
Of the union,
Above understanding.

Daer ons moet ontbliven
Een becliven
Ere claerheyt
In een verlanghen
In .i. vore hanghen
Eenre deensterheyt;

There, we must go without
A cleaving
To illumination,
In a desire,
In a veil
Of darkness.

Een edel ic en weet hoe
Noch dus noch soe
Dat ons leidet in
Ende ons berect
Ende ons in trect
In ons beghin.

Something noble, I know not how
—neither this way, nor that—
Leads us in
And guides us
And draws us
Into our beginning:

Wat gheet, wat keert,
Wat wiset, wat leert
Herte ochte sin:
Het blivet mi ghetes,
Hi die es
Alles begin.

What goes, what turns,
What guides, what teaches
Heart or mind,
It is all one to me,
He who is
Origin of all.

Gedicht Achttien B
Ay god, si werden rike,
Die groene ende ripe
Ende al dat mach vergaen;
Al schelden quite
Ende enechleke
Uwe minne ontfaen.

Poem Eighteen B[3]
O God, they grow rich
The green and the ripe,
And all that might pass away;
All debts repaid,
They receive
Your love uniquely.

Want met u ghemene
Te sijn allene
Dat es delijt;
Ende el niet
Dan verdriet,
Dat ghi niet en sijt.

For to be common
With you alone,
Is delight,
And there is aught
But sorrow
Where you are not.

Menne mach niet kinnen
Sonder u minnen

Without loving you,
None can know

3 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 98–111.

Wie ghi sijt,
Noch niet inne
In uwe minne
Sonder strijt.

Who you are,
And cannot enter
Your love
Without a fight.

Dies moet men striden
Ende liden
Menich leet,
Eer men weet dat
Hoe men dat pat
Uwer minne gheet.

So one must fight
And suffer
Many sorrows
Ere one learns
How to travel the path
Of your love.

Maer en rout hem niet
Sijn langhe verdriet
Die daer toe comt
Dat hi mach ghewinnen
Een smaken uwer minnen
In enegher stont.

But they have no remorse
Of their long sorrow,
Those who reach
And receive
A momentary taste
Of your love.

Maer wat men mach smaken,
Het blivet alle haken,
Onthiet men comt daer
Dat wi nu hopen
Dat wert ontploken
Ende openbaer.

But the taste
Remains all yearning
Until what we hope now
Is reached,
Opened,
And revealed.

Ende die grote sommen
Diere waer ommen
Sonder ghetal
Die doen mi kinnen
Dat ic u minnen
Moet boven al,

And the great sums
Of the innumerable
Reasons
That teach me
Why I must love you
Above all,

Ontgaen mi, here,
Alse ic mi kere
Al bloet op u,
Ende moet daer omme
Sonder waeromme
Minnen u om u.

Escape me, Lord,
When I turn myself
Entirely, purely to you
And can do naught
But love you for you
Without a ‘why.’

Hij swighe al stille,
Die merken wille
Mine tale,
Hi heves noet,
Sal hise al bloet
Versinnen wale.

Hush now,
And note
My words,
It is necessary indeed
To understand them
Completely purely.

Moghedise versinnen,
Dankes der minnen
Ende nempter ute raet,
Maer blives bloet;
Wast also groet
Dat ghise verstaet.

If you understand,
Thank love for it,
And be advised,
And yet remain bare;
Grow thus,
So you understand.

In allen hove
Es mate van love
Beide lief ende weert;
Maer blijfdi in maten,
Ghine moech niet laten
Al dat u deert.

At every court,
Good measure is praised,
Cherished and valued;
But rest in moderation,
And never will you leave
All that hinders you.

Horen ende swighen
Dat hoeric prisen
Over sere;
Maer nemmer swighen
Dat es een crighen
In die overste ere.

'Hear and be silent':
I often
Hear praised.
But 'never being silent'
Is to struggle
For the highest honor.

Ghi en wert blent,
Ghi blivet ghescent
Ghi en moghet niet leven;
Maer blijfdi blent,
Sone moghedi twent
Gaen sonder vraghen

Unless you are struck blind
You remain disfigured
And cannot live;
But remain blind, and
You will go nowhere
Without asking

Den rechten pat
Die leet ter stat
Daer es die feeste;
Maer sien verliesen
Ende sien verkiesen
Dat es die meeste.

The straight road
That leads to
The feasting hall;
But to lose sight
And to choose sight:
That is greatest.

Wildi vele horen
Ghi sult verdoren,
U sal verleyden
U ghepens
So menichsens
In valschen steden.

Desiring to hear much,
You will grow foolish;
Your thoughts
Will misguide you
On roads that
Lead you amiss.

Maer altoes horen
Dat es vercoren
Ende groet van prise,
Waer dat sleet
Dat altoes steet
Inden gherive.

But always hearing
Is preferable
And highly praised
When it conquers
Whatever is
Mere comfort.

Hout u over niet,
Wat u ghesciet,
Dat u niet lette
Die overmoet
Die gherne doet
Den dogheden smetten.

Consider yourself nothing,
Whatever occurs,
And be not hindered
By pride,
Which likes to taint
The virtues.

Maer ghine acht u groot,
Ghi blivet bloet
Ende sonder ere,
So ghi u meer kint,
So u meer mint
God onse here.

But do not deem yourself high:
You remain pure
And without honor;
The more you know yourself,
The more God our Lord
Loves you.

Der middelheit pleghen
Dat es salich leven,
Segghen ons die vroede;
Maer middelheit moet af
Eer men in mach
Ten edelen goede.

Practicing moderation
Is the blessed life,
As the wise tell us.
But moderation must cease
Before we can reach
The noble good.

Sijt altoes vroet
Ende wat ghi doet
Voresiet met rade,
Dat men in hove
Vertrekt in love
U vroede dade.

Be always wise,
And consider well
All that you do,
So that the courtiers
Recount with praise
You wise deeds.

Maer ghi moet scinen .i. sot
Ende heten .i. spot
In eertrike,
Eer ghi hebt prijs
Ochte wert wijs
Ghewaerlike.

But you must appear mad
And be mocked
On earth,
Before you attain your prize
Or become
Truly wise.

Wat mach u besluten,
Al sidi buten
Rike van haven?
Opdat ghi binnen
Dervet der minnen,
Ghi moghet wel claghen,

What can isolate you,
Though you are outside
The realm of possession?
Lacking love
Within is
Good cause for complaint,

Ende wenen ende carmen,
Ghelijc enen armen
Die niet en hevet;
Want wie haers dervet
Hi blivet ontervet,
Wat men hem ghevet.

And weeping and moaning
Like a pauper
Who has nothing;
Because those who lack it,
Will never inherit,
Whatever they are given.

Menich ypocrite
Gheet in abite
Van goeden lieden;
Maer buten scone
Ende binnen hone
Dat en mach niet dieden.

Many hypocrites
Dress themselves
As good folk;
But outer beauty
And inner deception,
Is entirely senseless.

U es doghen goet,
Het ghevet u spoet
Al eest u suer;
Het dodet u sonden,
Het ganset u wonden,
Het maket u puer.

For you, suffering is good:
It makes you prosper,
Despite its bitterness;
It kills your sins,
It heals your wounds,
It makes you pure.

Maer wildi hoghen,
En hebt geen doghen
Al es u cont
Daer die gheloeven
Af verdroeghen
In menegher stont.

But to ascend higher,
Do not suffer;
You know all
That makes the faithful
Wither away
In many moments.

Dies hovets noet
Was soe groet
Alst hem wael sceen,
Wat soudense rouwe
In haer ontrouwe
Claghen de teen?

The need of the head
Was so great
When he saw it was good;
Why should the toes
Then grievously mourn
In their disloyalty?

In christus weghen
Ende in sijn leven
Moghdi merken
Hoe ghi selt volghen
Onverbolghen
In al uwen werken.

In Christ's ways
And in his life
You may see
How you shall follow
Peaceably
In all your works.

Dore christus wonden
Werdet si vonden,
Die edelheyt,
Die al weten
Doet vergheten
In ewicheit.

Through Christ's wounds
One will find:
Nobility,
Which makes one forget
All knowledge
In eternity.

Vaet op u cleet:
Cout ende heet
Suete ende fel,
Soe en deert u niet
Na spot verdriet
Noch seer na spel.

Hitch up your skirts
—Be it cold or hot,
Mild or harsh—
Then nothing will harm you,
Neither sorrow after derision,
Nor pain after mockery.

Houdet u dan
Saechte als een lam
Te selver stont,
Daer wijf ende man
Af werden gram
Alst hen toe comt.

Remain then
Meek as a lamb
At times when
Women and men
Become furious
When treated thus.

Wordi oec gram
So swighet dan;
Want erre ghedachte,
Al hadde sijs haer vermeten,
Si en soude niet spreken
Suete noch sachte.

When enraged,
Keep silent:
An evil thought,
If you might dare to speak it,
Should not be expressed,
Neither meekly nor mildly.

En smet u niet
Als ghi traecheit siet
In die u sijn bi;
Hebdi vreese groet,
Eens anders noet
En maect u niet vri.

Do not taint yourself
By the sloth you see,
In those near to you;
In your great fear
The need of another
Will not set you free.

Al staen die droeghe
Int gheloeve
Sonder pant,
Haest u voere
Ende maect u doere
In dat vette lant.

Though those with
Arid faith
Have no surety,
Hurry on
And make haste
To the fertile country.

Het is soe selc
Daer vloyet honech ende melc;
Dat es hen claer
Diet binnen sochten
Ende met .iij. vrochten
Quamen van daer.

It is such that
It flows with milk and honey;
Which is clear to those
Who have spied within
And returned bearing
Three fruits.

Ende brachtense ghedraghen
Daert die van israel saghen
Die edele ware;
Maer si en haddentere af
smaec noch ghore
Al leetse hen vore
Dan die niemare.

And they brought the fruit,
The noble goods,
Into the Israelites' sight,
But they could not taste or smell it,

though it lay before them,
And heard only the report.

Maer die vortwert gheet
Hi ontfeet
Dat edele hebben,
Daer die stille steet
Niet af en weet
Dan horen segghen.

But the one who advances
Receives
The noble goods,
Of which the one who stands still
Knows nothing
But hearsay.

Houdet alle ghedanen
Sonder miswanen
Welc si sijn,
Daer ghi niet af claer

Maintain appearances
—Whatever they may be—
Without reproach
If you do not clearly

En wet oppenbaer
Die waerheyt fijn.

And openly know
The subtle truth.

Want meneghe ghelike
Steet te begripe
Die men doet,
Daer die daet
Af schijnt quaet
Nochtan eest goet.

For many attitudes
People adopt
Are criticized,
Of which the deed
Seems evil,
Though it is good.

En laet u ghepens
Noch hier noch ghens
En ghenen tijt,
Dan sonderlinghe
In euweghe dinghe
Nemen delijt.

Let your thoughts
Wherever and
Whenever
Be not delighted
By aught
But eternal things.

Sijt bedect
Ende onbevlect;
Soe blijfdi vri
Ende altoes coene
In al uwen doene
Voer wien dat sij.

Be cautious[4]
And untainted,
And you will stay free
And ever valiant
In all your deeds
For whomever they may be.

Houdet uwen wille
Vaste ende stille
Altoes ghereyt,
Dat ghi hout gode
Te winke ende te ghebode
Vrie ledicheit.

Keep your will
Steady and still,
Ever ready,
So that you stay
Free and open
To God's sign and command.

Ghi moet u pueren
Van creaturen,
Suldi ontfaen
Dat heymeleec goet
Dat god hen doet
Die claer verstaen.

Cleanse yourself
Of creatures,
In order to receive
The hidden treasures
That God gives
To those who see clearly.

4 Possibly also 'covered' in the sense of secret, concealed or unknown.

Cracht van natueren
Die langhe mach dueren
Op uyttерstheyt
Es saen verteert
Alse men mint ende begheret
Die ewecheyt.

The power of nature
That endures
In exteriority,
Is quickly spent
When one loves and desires
Eternity.

In ernste noch in spele
Noch luttel noch vele
En erret u nemmermeere
Al vernemdi ochte hoert
Daer menich af ghestoert
Wert ende ontfeet seer.

Be not enraged
Either slightly or greatly
When in earnest or in jest,
Though you hear or learn
That which may
Distress and wound many.

Wat u sinne vaen,
Hout binnen u staen
Altoes op een,
Al eest u pine
Ghescheyden te sine
Te eender tijt in tween.

Whatever your senses perceive,
Remain inwardly
Always at one,
Even if it pains you
To be divided,
In two at once.

Niet en let
Alse ghi gheset
Werdet met coringhen.
Ghi en wederstaet
Haren iersten raet
Eer si in u minghen.

Do not tarry
When beset
By temptations.
Resist their first insinuations
Immediately,
Before they infiltrate you.

Want het es groet sorghe
Willens in borghe
Dat heere tontfane
Dat die van binnen,
Maechtse verwinnen,
Begheert doet te slane.

For it is very foolish
Willingly to receive
That army into the castle,
The residents of which
It desires to murder
If it can overwhelm them.

Men moet sijn verre gheleydet
Ende wide ghebreidet
Doer der sinne verstaen
Metter minnen,
Eer men mach kinnen
Ochte licht ontfaen.

One must be led far
And made wide
—beyond reason's understanding—
Through love
Before one may know
Or receive the light.

Maer die met sterker minnen	But those placed far
Verre doer kinnen	Beyond knowledge
Wert gheset	By strong love
Hi moet quelen	Must suffer
Ende helen	And conceal
Dat hem let.	Their sorrow.
Ende hi en mach niet wale	The ailment
Van sijnre quale	Will never be healed
Boete ontfaen,	Entire,
Die wijsheyt claer	If clear wisdom
Sine gheve daer	Does not enlighten
Licht int verstaen.	The understanding.
Die meest mint dien	Those who love most
Dien hi soude ontsien	The one they should fear,
Hi blivet vri,	Remain free.
Bi des ghelt minnen	Therefore, repay love
Met minnen, ghi en sult niet kinnen	With love, and you will
Wat ordel is.	Never know judgment.
Die troest en begheren	Those who do not fear
Noch vrese en can deren	And desire no comfort
Der dinghen van buten,	From exterior things,
Het en mach nieman	No-one may
Dies verdienen	Merit
Dies si ghebruken.	Their joy.
Alse die wijsheyt troest	When wisdom comforts
Ende verloest	And delivers
Den tijt van vreesen	The time of fear,
So bekinnen zij	They will confess
Dat hoghe na bi	The high nearness
Inder minnen ons heren.	In the love of our Lord.
Gedicht Negentien	**Poem Nineteen**[5]
Boven scriftuere	Above writing
Ende creatuere	And creation
Can redenne leren	Reason can learn,

5 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 112–115.

Ende clare versien
Ende nauwe bespien
Den wech ons heren.

And clearly see
And closely observe
The way of our Lord.

Gheberst u kinnen,
Ghesoeket binnen
Uwe eenvuldecheit,
Ghi vindet daer
Uwen spieghel claer
Altoes ghereyt.

If you lack knowledge
Search inwardly
For your simplicity.
There you will find
Your clear mirror,
Always ready.

Sonder middel, bloet
Te siene dat es groet
Wel hem diet can.
Men mach in enen aneblic
Daer worden quic
Ende volghen an,

It is great,
For those who can
To see bare, unmediated.
At a single glance,
One may quicken
And follow,

Ende dat achter es vlien
Ende vorwert sien
Ende een verkiesen
Ende daer omme al laten
Ende dat ewelike vaten
Sonder verliesen.

And abandon what is left behind
And look ahead
And choose One
And for this leave all
And perceive the eternal
Without loss.

Also ghedane herte
Doghet grote smerte
In allen stonden,
Alsi versteet
Dat si ontfeet
Bedruc van sonden.

Such a heart
Suffers great pain
At all hours
When it understands
That it receives
The burden of sin.

Dan blijft si bloede
Ende in node,
Tote dat si daer af
Na haer verstaen
Hevet ghenoech ghedaen
Na dat si vermach;

This leaves it humble
And wanting,
Until it has,
Reflectively
Atoned
All that it can;

Ende si en wert niet vri	And it is not freed
Vore hevet si	Before it has
Ghetughen van binnen	Testified within
Dat hare begripe	That its offences
Al sijn quite	Are all paid
Inder minnen.	In love.
Begheren ende minnen	Desiring and loving
Sonder hulpe van sinnen	Unaided by reason
Dies es noet,	Are required,
Ende dan buten ende binnen	And then without and within
Sijn sonder kinnen	To be unknowing
Ghelijc eenre doet.	Like the dead.
Leert kinnen	Learn to know
Tghebod der minnen,	The command of love,
Hoet niemans minne;	Hide no-one's love;
Minne bedect	Love protects
Dien si berect	Those it guides,
Alse die vloghe der seraphinne.	Like the wings of the Seraphim.
Hi moet in een voresmaken	He must become first
Tierst gheraken	In a foretaste
Ende ghewerdet sijn,	And be valued,
Die onghekeert	To remain moored,
Sal bliven ghemeert	Without return
Ane die godheyt fijn.	In the pure Godhead.
Gode daer boven	Praising God above
Met loste loven	Passionately
Al van hier	Ceaselessly
In vlietich op draghen	From down here,
Sonder versaghen	In an ardent upward striving,
Dat werc es fier.	Is a proud endeavor.
Innech op swinghende lost,	Inner, winged desire,
Edel es uwe cost	Noble is your effort
In die vaert,	In this journey,
Daer ghi vaet tijt	Where you grasp time

In uwe delijt	In your delight,
Ende niet en spaert.	And spare nothing.
Ay, op draghende lof,	O ascending praise,
Vaer int hemelsche hof	Journey to the heavenly court
Behelstenne daer;	Embrace him there;
Sijn keren, sijn comen	His going, his coming
Hevet mi benomen	Have taken from me
Troest ende vaer;	Consolation and fear;
Vresen, minnen;	Fear, love,
Begheren, kinnen	Desire, knowledge
Ende verstaen,	And understanding,
Hopen, haken,	Hope, longing,
Ghebruken, smaken	Joy, taste
Es mi af ghegaen.	Have left me.
Mi es weten ontgaen	Knowledge has escaped me
Ende dore verstaan	And beyond understanding,
Verre dore sen;	Far beyond reason;
Dies moetic swighen	Of this I must be silent
Ende noch bliven	And yet remain
Daer ic ben.	Where I am.
Maer het ghelijct eenre wustinen	But it is as a desert
Daer te sine	To be there,
Inden aert;	In the earth;[6]
Want daer en can gheraken	Because neither
Noch vertaken	Sense nor word
Sen noch waert.	Can reach it.
Gedicht Twintig	**Poem Twenty**[7]
Inder godheyt	In the divinity
Der persoenlecheyt	Of the Persons
En es vorme en ghene;	There is no form;
Daer es drieheyt,	There is threeness
In enicheyt,	In unity,
Bloetheyt allene.	Purity alone.

6 *Aert* is cultivated land (contrasted with desert).

7 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 116–117.

Die vorme des ierst gheboren,
Des persoens vercoren
Der driheit,
Es sceppere des vreden,
Die omme ons hevet leden
Der doet aerbeit.

The form of the firstborn,
The chosen Person
Of the Trinity,
Is creator of peace,
Who suffered for us
The labor of death.

Hi nam ane
Onse vorme, onse ghedane,
Onse sceppere, ons here,
Ende es creatuere
In onse nature:
Dat es groet ere.

He took our form,
Our appearance
—Our creator, our Lord—
And is a creature
In our nature:
A great honor.

Die vanden vader ghesendet,
Gheendet, ongheendet
Es boven sen,
Ende ute hem indeloes
Gheboren altoes
Werdert sonder beghen.

He, sent by the father
—mortal, immortal—
Is above sense,
And is born eternally
And constantly from him,
Without beginning.

Te haren beelde, te haren ghelike
Te sine euwelike
Woude ons maken
Die driewoldicheyt,
Daer onse ere in leyt
Boven alle saken.

The Trinity desired
To make us
To be always in its image
And likeness;
Therein lies our honor
Above all things.

Der minnen bedwanc
Maect den starken cranc,
Dat mach men kinnen
Daer hi sonder noet
Dit wonder groet
Dus wrachte van minnen.

The force of love
Makes the strong grow weak;
Which one may know
From the fact that he
Effected this great miracle
Without necessity, out of love.

Gedicht Eenentwintig
Menegherhande minne
In herte in sinne
Es puer minne ontsetten;

Poem Twenty-One[8]
A multitude of loves
In the heart and senses
Depose pure love;

8 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 118–120.

Het es ere ghensteren ghedencken,
Bloter minnen vermencken
Breken ende letten.

It is to think on a spark,
Crippling, breaking and
Hindering pure love.

Menegherhande toeval
Werdet enich al
In puer ghetes,
Alse du best soe ghedaen
Dat die hoe ghedaen
Nieman en es.

A multitude of accidentals
Becomes wholly one
In pure pleasure
When you have best done
What there are none
Who have thus done.

Alle dinghe
Sijn mi te inghe;
Ic ben so wijt:
Om een onghescepen
Hebbic begrepen
In eweghen tijt.

All things
Are too narrow for me,
I am so wide:
One uncreated
Have I embraced
In eternal time.

Ic hebdt ghevaen.
Het heet mi ontdaen
Wijdere dan wijt;
Mi es te inghe al el;
Dat wette wel
Ghi dies oec daer sijt.

I have caught it,
It has opened me
Wider than wide;
All else is too narrow for me
As well you know,
You who are there too.[9]

Men es vri
In dat nabi
Onghesceden;
Daer omme wilt hi
Dat also si
Met ons beden.

One is free
In the nearness,
Unseparated;
That is why he
Wishes to pray
That it be so with us.

Ghi moecht sijn erre
Die noch achter verre
In dat inghe sijt,
Ende te groter vromen
Niet voert en sijt comen
In dat wilde wijt.

You may err,
If you are far behind
In that narrowness,
And have not come far
Into the wild wideness,
And yet it would profit you greatly.

9 Possibly also 'you who are also such.'

Want in dat wide	For in the wideness,
Es men blide	One is joyful
In hope soe groet,	In such great hope
Dat men daer altoes	That one always seems relieved
Scijnt sorgheloes	From concerns
Van ewegher noet.	Of constant need.
Het es hen grote scade	It is of great detriment to those
Die traghen rade	Who obey
Ghehorsam sijn,	The languid counsel
Ende nemmermeer en kinnen	And never know
Wat bloter minnen	The rewards of
Loen sal sijn.	Of pure love.
Selker salegher minne	The mutual knowledge
Wert onderlinghe oetkinne	Of such a blissful love from God
Uut gode in hen ontdect	Becomes known to them
Metten gheeste ons heren	Through the spirit of our Lord,
Die in snel keren	Who comes and goes rapidly
In henondersprect.	In a mutual conversation.
Gedicht Tweeëntwintig	**Poem Twenty-Two**[10]
Het ghebaert sine ghelike	An endless one
In bliscapen eeuwelike	Bears his equal
Een indeloes,	In eternal joy,
Daer blict in werdicheit	Where the spirit of beauty
Die gheest des scierheit	Radiates always in the glory
Der beider minne altoes.	Of their mutual love.
Dit sijn .iii. ghelike	These are three equals
Ewelike	Eternal
Ene enicheit	One unity
Ende .i. in drie;	And one in three;
Aldus sijn sie	Thus they are
Ene gheweldicheit.	One sovereign power.
Een ledich achten	A free contemplation
Siere ghedachten	Of his thoughts

10 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 121–122.

Over lidende al	Which transcend all
Ghebaert alle dinc	Bears all things
Die ye wesen ontfinc	That ever received being
Ochte wesen sal.	Or ever shall be.
Het hevet traghen spoet	It is arduous
Te berechtenne den moet	To direct one's mind
Ute vreemder tale:	Away from alien language:
Die niet binnen en vaen	Those who enclose nothing
Ende daer na staan	And strive
Altemale	Completely
Datse in hem dwinghen	To subdue in themselves[11]
Dat hen toe bringhen	That which alien senses
Vreemde sinne,	Inflict on them,
Si en weten niet	They do not know
Wat hen gheschiet	What overcomes them,
Die leven in minne.	Those who live in love.
Daer minne leert	When love learns
Ende hare keert	And turns inward
In die enecheit	In the unity
Der ghedachten inne	Of thought,
Materien minne	It is always ready to
Altoes ghereit	Find there
Een soete gherief,	Sweet comfort,
Der memorien brief	A document always
Altoes ontdaen;	Open to memory;
Hen mach clene besluten	What they may grasp outside
Datse buten	Can hardly
Moghen vaen.	Contain them.
Wantse die scole der minnen	For the school of love
Leert van binnen	Teaches inwardly
Altoes vele meer,	Always much more
Met nuwer mare	Than alien teaching,

11 Or 'subdue in him' (i.e., the equal).

In dat blote claere,
Dan vremt gheleer.

With new tidings
In bare clarity.

Gedicht Drieëntwintig
Ghebenedijt
In alre tijt
Moetti sijn,
Ghi die verwect
Ende berecht
In minnen fijn

Poem Twenty-Three[12]
Blessed
Must you be,
For all time,
You who engender
And guide
In noble love

Al datter in levet,
Ende ghi al ghevet
Datse ontfaen,
Die contempleren
Ende speculeren
Licht ende verstaen.

All that live therein,
And give you all
That they receive;
Those who contemplate
And speculate
Light and insight.

Ghi sijt licht
Ende bericht
In dat anschijn
Der contemplacien;
Te diere collacien
En mach nieman sijn

You are light,
And you speak
In the light
Of contemplation;
Nobody can partake
In such discourse

Dan ghi ende si
Allene vri
In enecheit.
Si verliest te diere ure
Beelde ende figuere
Ende onderscheit,

Except you and her,
Alone, free,
United.
At that moment, she loses
Images and figures
And distinction,

Als ghi hare ghevet
Daer si bi levet
Uut uwer wijsheit
Daer se meer weet
Dan si versteet
Ute uwer volheyt.

When you give her,
What she lives on
From your wisdom,
When she knows more
Than she understands
From your fullness.

12 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 123–126.

Welc propheten cesseren	Whatever prophets
So reveleren,	Conceal or reveal,
Minne hevet pays	Love has peace
In de ghedachte,	Of thought,
Si bloet in crachte	She forcefully strips all away
In dies hoghes palays.	In this high palace.
Wat ghedachte vindet,	Whatever the mind thinks,
Hi blivet ongheindet	It remains incomplete
In blote minne	In pure love
Ende onverseyt	And ineffable
Na waerheyt	In truth
Ute redenen sinne.	By the sense of speech.
Heilicheyt	Holiness
Der godlijcheyt,	Of the divinity,
Die complexie sijt	Which is unity
Der ghedachten,	Of mind,
Die in u levet sachte	Lives serenely in you
Ende al elre in strijd.	But elsewhere in conflict.
Eneghe materie vri,	Single, free being,[13]
Versamen di	Gather yourself
In pure minne	In pure love
Sonder onderscheyt	Without distinction
Ene enicheit	One unity,
Boven sinne.	Above the senses.
Die de verborghene fine	Those who practice
Oefenen in den aenschine	Hidden nobility in the light
Haerre ghedachten enicheit,	Of their unity of mind,
Die beslut vander doet	Are secured from death
In hare wijsheyt bloet	In the pure wisdom
Die eweghe godheyt.	Of the eternal Godhead.
Hi blivet ghepijnt	Those who dare
Die dit gherijnt	To engage in this
Om onderwinden,	Remain pained.
Die questie es so sterc,	The matter is so hard

13 *Materie* may be used here in the sense of creatures or createdness (i.e., created being).

Alre sciencien clerc
Machse cume ontbinden.

That scholars of any science
Can hardly explain it.

Al blives menech onvroet,
Nochtan eest goet
Dat mense in talen hebbe
Die questie daer omme,
Datse en gheen domme
En weder segghe,

Though many remain misguided,
Yet it is good
That people raise the matter
In language
So no ignorant person
Can gainsay it.

Ende datse elc lye
Ende niemant en si partie
Ute sire doerheyt;
Want het es claer
Ende openbaer
Der bloter waerheyt.

And all can recognize
And none dispute it
From their ignorance;
Because it is clear
And revealed
From pure truth.

Gedicht Vierentwintig
Ic hebbe di gheproevet
Dat mi ghevoeghet
In die heymelijcheit
Dierre ghedachten,
Dat doet mi sachte,
Dat si ontseit

Poem Twenty-Four[14]
I have tasted you,
Which draws me
Into the secrecy
Of your thoughts.
It comforts me
By removing

Alle onghelike,
Ende houdet quite
Van alle dien
Dar middelheit
Onser enecheyt
Af mochte ghescien.

All inequality,
And remains free
From all things
That might cause
Mediation
In our union.

Dat herte es bedroeft
Dien niet en ghenoeft
Dat mach vergaen,
Alse dijn moet denct
Iet dat ontwenct
Dijn blote in staen.

The heart unsatisfied
By transience
Is saddened,
When the mind
Reflects on distractions
From its unmediated presence.[15]

14 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 123–126.
15 I.e., in God.

Hi die es	He who is
Belovet hem des	Rejoices in those
In wiene hi vendet	In whom he finds
Dese ghelike	This likeness,
Die hi heymelike	Whom he inwardly
Ute enen ontbendet.	Wrests from themselves.
Die sonder wesen	Those without being,
Hoghe lesen	Whose learning is great,
Ende niet el en kinnen	But who know nothing
Dan scriftuere	Except what texts
Ende creatuere	And creatures
Hen doet versinnen,	Make them understand,
Men machs niet achten	One must not consider
Dat se wachten	That they wait
Ende calengieren,	And lament,
Want si en willen daer boven	For they refuse
Niemanne gheloven	To believe any higher knowledge
Daer si faelgieren.	When they fall short.
Voresien van binnen	Interior anticipation
Maect buten ontkinnen	Is outward disavowal
Ende onachten;	And indifference;
Hets hem allene ghenoech	This alone suffices
Die mach tghevoech	The one who may await
Sijns sceppers wachten.	Union[16] with the creator.
Die wech es droeve	The path is sorrowful
Die gheet te ghenoeghe	That leads
Den creatueren,	To creatures' pleasure,
Ende so vol der mouden:	And covered with quick sand,
Diere hen in houden	Trapping those on the road
En connen hen ghepueren.	Who cannot purify themselves.
Hoghe merken	Great acclaim
In nederen werken	For modest works
Es minnen quellen.	Is torturous to love.

16 *Ghevoech* may also be 'will' or 'desire.'

Hoghe wonen	Those who live well
Ende neder tonen	Without ostentation
Blivet sonder vellen.	Do not fall.
Die ontgonnen	Those assailed
Ende verwonnen	And conquered
Hevet die minne,	By love;
Dies hem veronnen	The deceitful
Dat sijs begonnen,	Begrudge them
Sijn scalc van sinnen.	Their beginnings [in love].
Eer ic wiste	Before I knew
Der minnen liste	Love's tricks,
Hadsi alle mijn onste;	It had won all my favor;
Ic en hadde gheen hoede	I was unguarded
Datse iemanne moede	From the exhaustion
Maken conste.	It can inflict.
Al esse fier,	Though it is proud,[17]
Si es oec ghier	It is also greedy.
Ende scumet al	It plunders all
Ende verslindet	And devours
Al datse vindet	All that it finds
Sonder ghetal.	Immeasurably.
Maer dat es haer sede	But that is her way:
Si es melde mede	She is generous
Ende schinket van vollen.	And gives all good.
Maer die met haer drincken	But in the blink of an eye,
Doetse op een winken	Those who drink with her,
Bloet vertollen	Are forced to pay with their blood,
Maer drincken vaste.	And to drink ceaselessly.
Al doetse haer gaste	Though her guests
Aldus betalen,	Must pay thus,
Si comen gherne	They come happily
In haer taverne	To her tavern,
Wiltse onthalen.	If she is welcoming.

17 I.e., noble.

Ghi maect vri, minne,
In uwe sinne
Uwe ghebuere,
Die drincken te uwen,
Ghi doet vernuwen
Hare natuere:

Love, in your disposition
You set
Your neighbors free.
You renew
Their nature,
Those who drink with you.

Den ouden man
Doense ute, ende an
Weder den nuwen.
Dit es uwe bejach
Ende hare ghelach
Die drincken te uwen.

They strip off
Their old self, and clothe
Themselves with a new self.
That is your intent
And the nourishment
Of those who drink with you.

Menne daerf niet haken
Salmen smaken;
Het sal gheschien
Sonder wachten
Der ghedachten
Comen ende vlien.

One must desire nothing
If one is to taste;
It will occur
Without heeding
The to and fro
Of one's thoughts.

Alse minne toent
Datse hier loent
Hevet si onghelike,
Alse hoghe verheven
Ende wedersleghen,
Alse arm ende rike.

When love shows
Her rewards,
She manifests our inequality:
Like the elevated
And the lowly,
The rich and the poor.

Onse weten
Moet op beten
In twifelheyt
Ende alse op waen,
Saelt ons staen
In ghewarecheit.

Our knowledge
Must rise up
In doubt
And with uncertainty,
We will stand
In the truth.

Het en si verborghen
Ochte wi ghestorven
Wij sijn ghehoent;
Die went der locht
Waeyt wech die vrocht
Die daer vertoent.

Our life or death
Must remain concealed,
Else we are deceived;
The wind of the air
Blows away the fruit
That appears there.

De macht si trect,	Power draws,
Dat waert berect,	The word directs,
Die minne si leidet.	And love leads.
Alsoe drucken sij	Thus all three
De ziele, de drie,	Draw the soul
In de enecheyt.	Into their unity.
Daer in altemale	The saints have complete
Den heyleghen es wale	Enjoyment therein
Ende hebbe hare volheit,	And have their fullness,
Dat es in	Which is in
Dat yerste beghin,	The first beginning,
In die pure godheit.	In the pure divinity.
En houdet mine woerde	Consider not my words
Noch over boerde	As jests
Noch over spel,	Or games.
Ic hebbe gheseit	I have spoken
Gherechte waerheyt	Honest truth
Ende niet el.	And nothing else.
Die des wilt kinnen	To know this,
Volghe der minnen	Follow love
Sonder keer.	Without return.
Ghelovet moet sijn	The noble divinity
Die godheyt fijn	Must be praised
Emmermeer.	Evermore.

Gedicht Vijfentwintig	**Poem Twenty-Five**[18]
Begheric iet dats mi oncont;	Whether I desire anything, I do not know,
Want in onwetene sonder gront	Because I find myself captured constantly
Vendic mi ghevaen in alre stont.	In a fathomless unknowing.
Ic waent menschen sen nie en verstont,	I think human reason has never understood
So dat ghespreken mochte sijn mont	—In a way words may express—
Waer hi grondet die diepe slont.	How it fathoms the deep abyss.
Ic en wille mi menghen niet met hen	I will not associate with those
Die omme loen dienen ocht omme ghewen.	Who serve for wages or profit.

18 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 133–134.

Vraghet mi iemant waer dat ics ben,
Ic segge hem ic en weets meer no min;
Want niet bat en caent ghetonen mijn sin,
Dan een molesteen mach vlieten int swin.

Dit es ene wonderlike mare
Dat mi houdet in meneghen vare;
Si es meneghen verholen ende
mi openbare:
Daer ic der minnen volghede nare,
Daer bleef ic in hare
Verslonden in eenen eenvoldeghen stare.

Die dit staren mach verstaen
Hi es ghebonden ende ghevaen
Ende inder minnen prisoen so
vast ghedaen,
Hine mach hare nemmermeer ontgaen.
Maer diere es luttel so ghedaen,
Datse der minnen so verre ghestaen.

Ay, mi deus, wat es hem ghesciet,
Die dat en horet noch en siet
Dattenne jaghet ende daer hi vore vliet,

Ende dat hi mint ende van minnen ontsiet:
Der minnen jacht, hadde hi vore iet,
Jaghet hem van allen op een niet.

Gedicht Zesentwintig
Ic soude der minne noch gherne
naerre dringen
Constict van binnen wel toe bringhen.
Maer si en moghen dit liedekijn met
mi niet singhen,
Die hen vele met creatueren minghen.

When anyone asks where I am,
I tell them I do not know,
For my mind can reveal it no better
Than can a millstone float in the river.

This is a glad tiding,
That causes great anxiety
From many concealed but revealed
to me:
Wherever I followed love closely,
I remained consumed in her,
In a simple gaze.

They who understand this gaze,
Are bound and chained
And locked so securely in love's jail

That they can escape nevermore.
But there are few who dare
To endure love so far.

O my God, what has happened to them
Who neither hear nor see
What pursues them and from which
they flee,
That which they love and fear in love:
For all they might have had, love's pursuit
Chases them from all to naught.

Poem Twenty-Six[19]
Eagerly, I would struggle closer to love

If I could find the power within.
But those who often mix with creatures

Cannot sing this song with me.

19 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 135–137.

De blote minne die niet en spaert
In die weelde overvaert,
Alse si alles toevals wordt ontpaert,
Comt si in haren eenvoldeghen aert;

Pure love spares nothing
In the wild crossing.
When stripped of all accidentals,
She comes into her simple nature.

In bloter minnen toeverlaet
Moet sijn af der creaturen raet.
Want si van hen alle vorme slaet
Die si in hare simpelheyt ontfaet.

Abandon the counsel of creatures
In the refuge of pure love.
For she unmasks all their forms
Received in her simplicity.

Daer werden si alle wisen quite
Ende vervremdet van allen ghelike.
De arme van gheeste in eerdrike
Houden van rechte dese vite.

There she is freed from all modes
And estranged from all compare.
The poor in spirit on earth
Justly live this life.

Het en es niet allene om verre gaen
Noch om broet noch om ander goet ontfaen:
Die arm van gheeste sijn sonder waen
In die wide eenvoldicheit ontfaen,

It is not merely for a long journey's sake
Nor to receive bread or other goods:

The poor in spirit are undoubtedly[20]
Received in the wide oneness.

Die en heeft inde noch beghin
Noch vorme, noch wise, noch redene, noch sin
Noch duncken, noch dincken, noch merken, no weten;
Si es sonder cierkel wijt onghemeten.

It has neither end nor beginning,
Nor form, nor mode, nor reason, nor sense,

Nor impression, nor thought, nor notice,
nor knowing;
It is unencompassed, wide and immeasurable.

In dese weelde wide eenvuldicheit
Wonen die arme van gheeste in enecheyt.
Daer en vendense niet dan ledicheit
Die altoes antwerdet der ewicheyt.

In this wild, wide oneness
The poor in spirit live united.
There they find nothing but emptiness,
Which answers always to eternity.

Dit es gheseghet met corter tale;
Maer hare wech es lanc, dat wetic wale.
Want si moeten doghen meneghe quale
Die dit volproeven altemale.

Though briefly stated,
Their road is long, as well I know.
For many trials must be endured
By those completely sated.

20 Possibly 'without delusion.'



ILLUSTRATION 1 *Manuscript Antwerpen Ruusbroecgemnootchap Neerl. 385 II (Pseudo-Hadewijch)*

Gedicht Zevenentwintig	**Poem Twenty-Seven**[21]
Een edel licht lichtet in ons fijn	A noble light shines brightly within us,
Dat wilt altoes dat wi hem ledich sijn;	It desires us always to be open[22] to it
Die puere voncke, dat ghensterkijn,	The pure spark, the glimmer,
Die levelichheit der siele mijn,	The very life of my soul,
Dat enich altoes met Gode moet sijn,	It needs must always be with God:
Daer lichtet God inne sijnen eweghen scijn.	There God shines in his eternal radiance.
Dat es verborghen in ons binnen;	It is hidden within us;
Het en can redene noch sin versinnen	Neither reason nor sense comprehends,
Niet anders dan met bloter minnen.	Aught but with pure love.
Si sijn overformet diet bekinnen	Those who confess it are transformed
Overnatuerleke uter voncke van binnen	Transcendentally, by the inner spark,
In een godlec eenvoldich kinnen.	In a divine, simple knowing.
De toeval der menichvuldicheit	The accidentality of multiplicity
Benemt ons onse eenvoldicheit,	Robs us of our simplicity.
Alsoe sinte Jan evangeliste seit:	As Saint John the Evangelist said:

21 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 138–139.

22 Literally 'empty.'

Dat licht lichtet inder demsterheit,
Ende niet en begrijpse dies lichs claerheit
In hare die donckere deemsterheit.

'The light shines in the darkness,
And the light's clarity is not grasped
By the dark gloom.'

Waren wi comen te desen lichte,
Soe werden wi ledich in sijn ghesichte
Van alre wise, van alre berichte,
Van alre storien, van alre gedichte;
In een afgrondich onghestichte
Saghen wij dan dat licht inden lichte.

If we were to come to this light,
We would be empty in his sight
Of all modes, of all speech,
Of all histories and poems.
In an abyssal emptiness,
We would see the light in the light.

Scamt u, ghi die langhe hebt ghescenen,
Dat u so langhe moet toeval menen
Ende onghewesent altoes cruept henen!
Mochte eenvoldicheit u in hare ghewenen
Datse u met haren lichte hadde overscenen,
Soe bleefdi van beelden, van formen ongherenen.

Shame on you, who have long pretended
Accidentals are so much to be pursued,
Ever crawling hence without being!
If simplicity inured you in herself,
Bathing you with her light,
You would remain unhindered by images and forms.

Ghi moecht u selven zere versien
Dat ghi dat licht soeket buten met pertien
Ende in u gheel es ende u gheheel wilt vrien.
Wilde derre philosophien
Sijn meester, sone mogdi u selfs niet lien
Noch niets achten, maer alles vertien.

You must guard yourself closely
Against seeking the light without, in parts,
It is wholly within, wishing to free you whole.
If you wish to master this philosophy,
Do not believe in yourself.
Esteem nothing, but relinquish all.

Ay, deus, hoe grote edelheyt
Es dese vrie ledicheyt
Daer van minnen minne al ontseyt
Ende niet en soect buten haers selfsheyt,
Alse si die eweghe salicheyt
Hevet besloten in haere enicheit.

O God, what great nobility
Is this free emptiness
Where love, through love, refuses all
And searches for naught outside herself,
Enclosing eternal blessedness
In her unity.

Gedicht Achtentwintig
Ic late gherne af slaen mijn hovet,
Indien datse doch mijnre noet ghelovet,
Si die mi vanden sinne rovet
Metter treckender chiere die si mi toghet.

Poem Twenty-Eight[23]
I would gladly be beheaded
If she would then believe my need,
She who has robbed me of my senses,
With the enticing beauty she shows me.

23 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), pp. 140–141.

Waer omme toendi mi dat ghelaet
Daer ghi mi namaels met verslaet?
Want alst met mi ter noet wert gaet,
So drijfdi met mi uwe baraet.

Why do you show me this face
With which you then defeat me?
For when I am in need
You wound me with your wiles.

Ay, minne, u treken sijn te snel;
Alse ghi toent een, so meendi .i. el;
Nu stappans suete, nu stappans fel;
Bleefdi op een, soe daedi wel.

O love, your tricks are too fast;
When you show one, you mean another,
By turns sweet, then at once cruel;
You would do well to do but one.

U baraet dat es te staerc
Hen die dienen in uwe paerc
Ende alsoe setten hare ghemarc
Om te voldoene uus willen warc.

Your wiles are too fierce
For those who serve in your enclosure
And thus set their sights
On fulfilling your will's work.

Ghi versouft wise ende vroede
Ende settse in menichfoldeghen moede;
Alsi meest scinen bute spoede,
Ghefdi hen uwe giften sonder hoede.

You bewilder the wise and the shrewd
And drive them to manifold moods;
When their condition seems worst,
You bestow your gifts without warning.

Ghi sijt scalc ende goedertieren;
Saecht alse een lam, ende onghehiere
Alse onghetemde welde diere
In die woustine, sonder maniere.

You are malicious and merciful
Soft as a lamb, and cruel
Like untamed wild animals,
Unmannered in the wilderness.

Gedicht Negenentwintig

Willecome, oerspronc van binnen!
Du brenges edel hemelsch kinnen;
Du voeds altoes met nuwer minnen;
Du houdes mi ledech in dijn versinnen

Alles toevals met uuters kinnen.

Poem Twenty-Nine[24]

Welcome, origin within!
You bring noble, heavenly knowledge;
You nourish always with new love;
In your contemplation, you keep me empty
Of the accidentals of outward knowledge.

Der bloter waerheyt enicheyt,
Die al der redennen doen ontseyt,
Houdet mi in die ledicheit

The oneness of pure truth
That rejects all reason's doings
Keeps me in this emptiness

24 Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten* (1952), p. 142.

Ende voeghet mi te diere evuldicheit
Des ewechs wesens ewicheyt.

And joins me to that oneness,
The eternal being's eternity.

Daer bennic alder redennen ontpronden.
Alle die nie scriftuere verstonden

En mochtent met redenen niet orconden
Dat ic bloet ende onbewonden
Hebbe in mi boven redenne vonden.
Deo gracias. Amen.

There I am robbed of all reason.
All those who never understood
the Scriptures
Cannot reasonably account for what
I have found, pure and simple,
In myself above reason.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Appendix Two: Two Poems Attributed to Ruusbroec

The Middle Dutch text of these poems is in manuscript Marburg/Lahn, Westdeutsche Bibliothek (olim Berlin, Staatsbibliothek), Germ 4° 1398. Laurentius Surius translated the poems into Latin (not in verse). For this translation, we have used the text as published in Robrecht Lievens, 'De twee aan Ruusbroec toegeschreven liederen,' *Handelingen der Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* XI (1957), pp. 110–133. We provide the Middle Dutch text, supplementing Surius' Latin translation where the Middle Dutch is missing.

Gedicht Eén
Est sane quod gaudeam supra tempus in Amore, tametsi mundus id ferre non potest, & rudes huius expertes sunt. Quibus si patefaciam iubilum meum, meo me honore spoliant. Satius est ut interim feram: equidem me sempiternum novi supra tempus, idque cordi meo haud vulgarem ingerit letitiam.

Poem One
Rightly, I rejoice in love in this season, though the world cannot bear it and the uninitiated do not know it. If I revealed my jubilation to them, they would rob me of my honor. It is better to endure this for now, as I am always above time, and this fills my heart with uncommon joy.

Wille wy uns van bynnen merken
So moghe wi ons vorstan
Dat dese grove werke
Om loen syn gedaen.
We de warheit wil vorstan
He moet in hem selven gaen
Und leven boven synne

To perceive ourselves within
We must understand
That these initial works
Are performed for pay.
To understand the truth,
One must enter oneself
And live above reason.

Een luter kennen compt van binnen
So wal hem diet bevinden
Nemo illis facile comparari possit.

Pure knowledge originates within;
Happy are those who find it,
They are beyond compare.

Iam incessi omnia. Essentia mea usqueadeo locuples est, ut me nemo capiat. Olim cum male captus ac irretitus tenerer, tam me sibi subditum mundus habebat, ut nec leviter quidem absque molestia pulsarer: intantum a meipso in res fluxas et caducas aberraram. At nunc nexibus illis absolutus sum: id quod diu quaesivi, ac obtinere conatus sum: et iam liberum me sentio: itaque sancto vacabo ocio: rudes crassosque homines fugiam, et suis eos opinionibus reliquam, quibus tamen falluntur ac evertuntur. Ubi ab omni aeternitate secundam ideam extiti, illic aeterno vivam.

Now I have departed all. My being is so rich[26] that none can encompass me. Before, I was wretchedly tempted and ensnared, the world kept me subjected, and I could not cast off the burden, so far had I strayed from myself in transient, faltering things. But now I am released from these bonds, for which I long searched and struggled. Now I feel free, and am empty for a holy rest. I will flee from uninitiated, unrefined people, and abandon the opinions that deceive them and lead them astray. Where I have existed unto my image from all eternity, there will I live forever.

Deus omnipotens,
De uns heft ghelaten[25]
Na syns selvesheyt
He is mynne boven maten
Dat licht is em bereet
Zo we dat in hem selven geet
He en vindet der werlt lief noch leet

Dan een gelutert wesen.

Almighty God
Who surrendered himself to us,
As he is,
Is measureless love.
That light is prepared for those
Who enter themselves,
And do not feel the world's pleasure or pain,
But only a pure being.

Hem en is noch wech noch wise
Het is een ewich syn
Wat men leset of scrivet
Het blivet dat silve sijn
Het is in hem selven also vry
Kynder nu ghelovedes my
Dar en mach gheen toeval wesen

There is no path nor mode for him;
Only eternal being.
Whatever one reads or writes,
It remains the same being;
It is free within itself.
Children, believe me,
There can be no accidentals there.

25 We translate here according to Surius' Latin version: *Qui seipsum totum nobis dereliquit*.
26 Or 'fruitful.'

So we dat in hem selven kent
He mach wal blide wesen.

Those who know this in themselves,
May rightfully rejoice.

Gedicht Twee

So we de warheyt wal vorsteet
Unde hem kan houden binnen
Dat em en rure noch lef noch leet
Van enyghen dyngen
Dicke is hem van bynnen wale
He is behuet vor alle quale
Dar hem de synnen up keren ute
Och wat vrouden is godes gebruken

Ic hebbe den toeval so dorgaen
Na hoger mynnen rade
Myn gemuede is so onghevaen
Ic love der mynnen dade
Se kan bringen uit alre not
Van anderheiden mact se oec bloet
Se doet de zele vorvleten
Och wen mach ors weghes verdreten

O ewich wesen du does beruren
Te male der zelen crachte
Als du den gheest in dyn woste
wilst vuren
So rostet al dat ye wrachte
Dat claer gesichte wardet dar vorclaert
Na hoger wezeliker aert
In dat stille gebruken
Och laes dat wi uns keren ute.

Dar vloyen de riviren clar
Van der fonteynen wyseloes
De dar af drinct leeft sonder vaer
Unde het is niet dat he vercoes

Poem Two

Those who penetrate the truth,
And can remain within,
Unmoved by the pleasure or pain
Of anything,
Then often it is well within;
They are guarded from all suffering
To which the senses turn outward.
O, what delight is God's enjoyment.

The superfluous I have undergone,
Following high love's counsel,
My spirit is so unfettered;
I praise the deeds of love;
She can save from any danger;
She purifies what is not her own.[27]
She makes the soul flow out.
O, who can reject her ways?

O eternal being, you stir
The powers of the soul entirely.
When you seek to draw the spirit into
your wasteland, all that was active rests.
Clear sight is illuminated there
According to the high nature of being
In that silent enjoyment.
O alas that we should turn away!

There flow the clear rivers
From the modeless source.
Who drinks of them lives fearlessly,
But it is not what they chose.

27 (dan de minne).

Des blivet syn gemuede vry	Thus their spirit remains free;
He heft dar dat verre by	There they have that Far-Near;
He en siet nummer ghelike	Which is beyond all compare.
Och dat es vroude rike	O, that is rich joy!
Dicke is hem van bynnen wale	Often it is well within,
De dus der mynne weghe gheet	For those who travel the ways of love,
Went he horet de verborghene tale	Because they hear the secret word
Dar men al in een vorsteet	In which they understand all in one.
God gheve uns dar to komenne spoet	God grant that we arrive there soon
Want syn biwesen is vroude grot	Because his presence is great joy;
Het doet dar herte in mynnen ontsynken	It makes the heart sink away in love.
Och ho salich is den denken.	O, how blissful to think of him!

Appendix Three: The Prologue by Brother Gerard of Saintes

In approximately 1363, Brother Gerard of Saintes, the procurator of the Charterhouse of Herne, copied five of Ruusbroec's works (*Realm*, *Espousals*, *Tabernacle*, *Stone*, and *Little Book*) and supplemented them with a prologue. Gerard's manuscript is lost, but his prologue was transmitted in two manuscripts (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 3416–24, siglum D, and Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2412–13, siglum: H). With the possible exception of the eulogy of Ruusbroec by Jan van Leeuwen, this is the oldest extant document about Ruusbroec. Gerard of Saintes (alias Gerard van Sint-Renelde) entered the Charterhouse of Herne in 1338 and was appointed procurator in about 1343. He was well known for the quality of his manuscripts and for his erudition in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He later lived at the Charterhouses of Zelem and Liège, where he died after 1371 (*Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), p. 85).

This is the prologue of the Reverend Gerard, who compiled these books when he was procurator of the Charterhouse.

The light of God's mercy cannot remain hidden in those in whom it dwells. It must shine forth through their works, words or signs. And thus, because the man and priest who wrote these five books was filled with abundant grace, he not only revealed it through his virtuous works and spiritual words, but also through his writings, so that long after his death, all those who came after him could be edified by them.

This author's name was John of Ruusbroec, and he was first a devout priest and chaplain in Brussels in Brabant, at the church of Saint Gudule. It is there that he

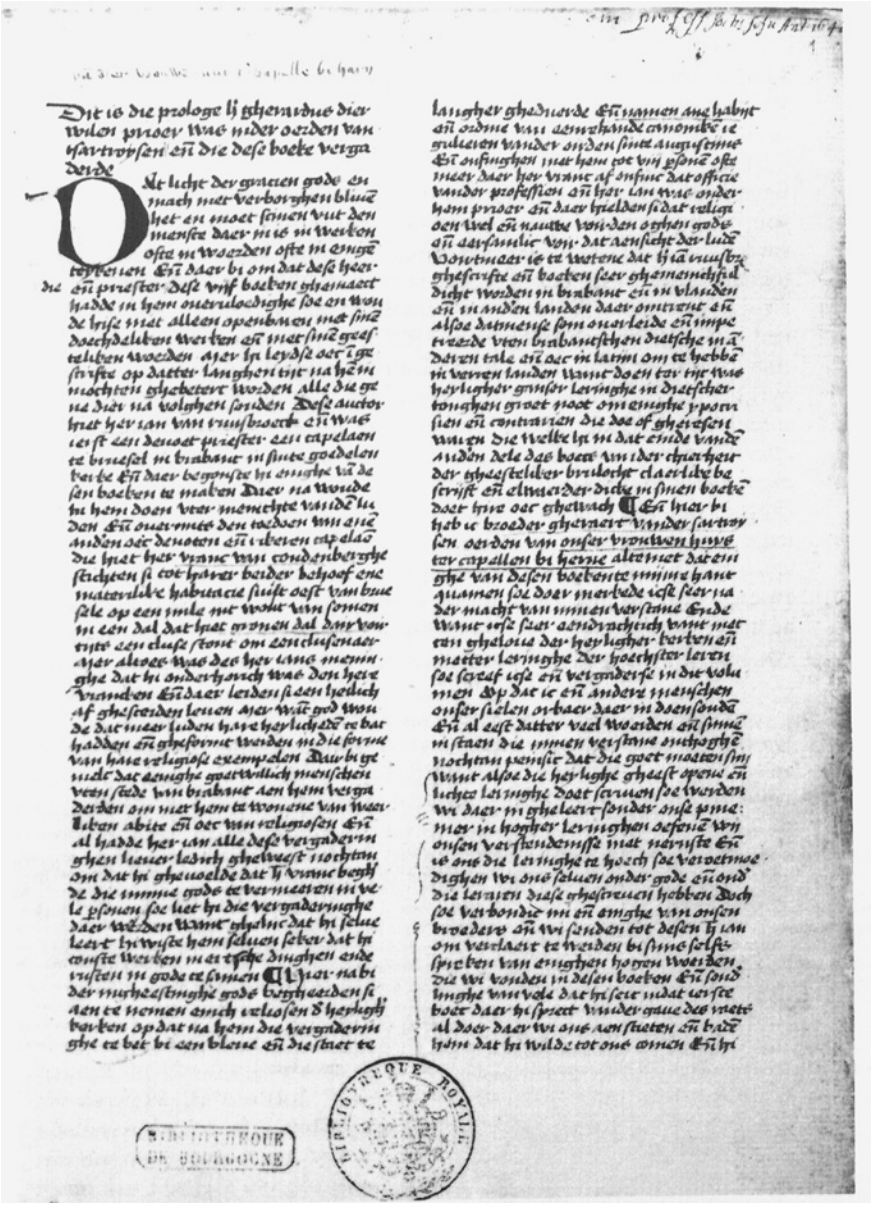


ILLUSTRATION 2 *Manuscript Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 3416–21* (*Gerard of Saintes*)

started writing some of these books. Later, he wanted to remove himself from public life. Thanks to the intervention of another devout, but wealthier chaplain by the name of Frank van Coudenberg, they were able to acquire a modest residence located to the south-east of Brussels, about one mile into the Sonian Forest, in a valley called Groenendaal, where a hermitage had once stood.

But Reverend John always insisted on remaining the subordinate of Reverend Frank. And there they led a holy, secluded life. But because God wanted more people to benefit from their holiness and to be formed in accordance with their religious example, well-intentioned people—both lay and religious—from the towns of Brabant went to live with them. And though Reverend John would have preferred to be exempt from such a community, he did not attempt to prevent its development because he was convinced that Reverend Frank desired to increase many people's love of God. He knew of himself—as he also teaches—that he could both work in earthly affairs and rest in God at the same time.

Hereafter, inspired by God, they desired to adopt a religious rule of the Holy Church so that their community would remain united after their deaths and their religious state would endure. They took the habit and the rule of the Regular Canons of the Order of Saint Augustine and they received about eight people or more who professed to Reverend Frank. Reverend John became prior under him. They followed the rule honestly and piously before the eyes of God and honorably before the eyes of the world.

Furthermore, it should be known that Reverend John of Ruusbroec's writings and books are often copied in Brabant and Flanders and the surrounding countries, and that people sometimes translate and interpret them from Brabant [Middle] Dutch into other languages and also into Latin so that they may be read in distant countries. For in those days, there was a great need for comprehensive holy Christian doctrine in the Dutch language, due to a number of heresies and false teachings that had emerged, which he clearly describes at the end of the second part of his book *The Spiritual Espousals* and he also speaks about them often in other parts of his books.

I, Brother Gerard of the Carthusian Order of the House of Our Lady of Kapellen near Herne, read these books whenever they were available to me, and paying close attention to the best of my understanding, and because I found them to be entirely consonant with the teaching of the Holy Church and with the teaching of highest doctrine, I copied them and compiled them in this volume in order that I and other people's souls would benefit from them. And even though there are many words and sentences in them that exceed my understanding, I am convinced that they are good. When the Holy Spirit inspires the writing of clear and enlightened books, we need not take great pains to understand them. In higher learning, however, we must exercise our minds in earnest and if the teaching is too high, we must humble ourselves before God and before the masters who wrote them.

And thus a number of my brothers and I took courage and wrote to Reverend John requesting an explanation—in his own words—of some of the high teaching we found in these books, and specifically of many of the things he wrote in his first book, in which he discusses the gift of counsel, which perplexed us. We asked him to come and visit us. Being very benevolent, he came five long miles[28] on foot, though it was a great effort. Many pious things could be written about him, about his mature and happy countenance, of his clement and humble speech, of his spiritual, outward being and of his religious attitude in his dress and all his actions.

This was especially noticeable from his bearing at the monastery, when we spoke to him wishing to hear the spiritual teaching of his high learning, but he never spoke from his own authority, always referring to examples and words from the holy teachings, through which he wanted to edify us in the love of God and to strengthen our service of the Holy Church.

When two or three of us spoke to him about these books and told him that we had acquired and copied them, his spirit appeared so free of vainglory that it was as though he had not written them himself. And when I spoke to him alone about the words in the first book he had written, *The Realm of Lovers*, which had perplexed us, he serenely answered that he did not know that the book had been circulated and that it troubled him that the book had been made known (because it was the first book he had written). It had secretly been lent to us to be copied by a priest who had once been Reverend John's secretary, despite the fact that he had been forbidden from circulating it. When I heard this, I wanted to return his first book about the realm of lovers to him so that he could do his will with it, but he refused and said that he would write another book to clarify how he had intended the words and how he wanted them to be understood. He did so, and that is the last book of the five, which begins 'The Prophet Samuel.'

Those three days—the time this religious man was with us—we found all too short. For every person who spent time with him or spoke to him benefited from it. And when we, together, beseeched him to stay with us longer, he responded thus: 'My good brothers, above all, we must be obedient. I told my reverend prelate, our provost that I intended to return home on a specific day and until that time, he gave me permission to be absent. I must be on my way on time, in order to observe the obedience to which I am bound.' We were all much edified by this.

Furthermore, about another book—*The Spiritual Espousals*—he said that he considered it to be a reliable, good work and that it had been copied as far as the foothills of the mountains.

Furthermore, the book on the tabernacle [*The Spiritual Tabernacle*] recommends itself because there is not one person in the body of the Holy Church—from the pope to

28 A great German mile is approximately 10km. Presumably this is the mile measurement to which Gerard refers, since Groenendaal is approximately 50 km from Herne.

the lowliest—who would not take spiritual benefit from it if he were to read and understand it. It also recommends its author because it contains many subtle spiritual truths extracted from the most intricate teachings in the Bible and which are all brought together in one, namely, in the human soul, just as the tabernacle, with all that it comprised, was one structure. I confess that in the book on the tabernacle, I occasionally added separate paragraphs containing the teachings of other learned people concerning the external form of the tabernacle. Not in order to diminish the teaching of the author, but rather to enable a subtle and enlightened reader to draw edifying insights from it. And in the same work, in the part in which he discusses the twenty birds which God forbad to be eaten, I removed—not without reason—a severe accusation he made against every level of the Holy Church because he was so disappointed by the extent to which they have fallen and continue to fall from their original condition. These rebukes are, however, to be found in other copies of his books.

Furthermore, about the fourth book—'the signet ring' or *The Sparkling Stone*—one ought to know that Reverend John was once sitting with a hermit and discussing spiritual matters and at the end of their conversation, the brother earnestly requested him [Ruusbroec] to clarify their discussion for him in writing to his or others' benefit. Following this request, he wrote this book, which alone contains enough to bring a person to a perfect life.

And of the fifth book on the explanation of the high truth [*The Little Book of Enlightenment*], you have previously heard why he wrote it. Leaving aside a number of other explanations he makes in this book, he clarifies three kinds of union that the good human soul might experience with God. The first is with intermediary, the second is without intermediary and the third is without difference or distinction. When we first heard the expression 'without difference,' we were perplexed by it because without 'difference' means the same as without 'dissimilarity,' without any 'alterity,' 'exactly the same,' without 'distinction.' And yet it is impossible for the soul to become so united to God that they become one being, as he himself writes there. The question is thus, why does he call the third union without 'difference'? As to this, I think the following: the first union he calls with intermediary and the second he calls without intermediary and for the third he wanted to express an even closer union but he could not express it in one word without circumlocution except by using without 'difference,' even though it was a little too high to express his meaning. He explains just how far too high using Christ's words, since he prayed to his Father that all his beloved should become one the way he is one with the Father. Although Christ prayed thus, he did not mean that all should become one with the Father the way he has become one—one substance in the Godhead—because that is impossible. Rather, he meant that they should become, as he is, one enjoyment and one blessedness with the Father without difference.

There are certain people who prefer to study religious works in Latin than in the vernacular, even if they understand the vernacular better than Latin. These people do not seek the fruits of their study, namely, learning. Indeed, I cannot grasp the teaching of books of which I understand the language poorly, with great difficulty or not at all. I may gain insight into writings of which I do not mistake the meaning of the words or sentence structure. And if I understand the work, I may learn something from it. Without understanding, however, I will never learn anything.

It is also to be noted that these books were written in pure Brussels [Middle] Dutch and they contain few words in Latin, French or any other language. This same Brussels Dutch is used less colloquially in these books than people usually speak it. Indeed, in their usage, these people are inclined to omit or reduce the use of pronominal articles. Here is an example: when they say *dat ierste* (the first), *dat anderde* (the second), *dat derde* (the third), *dat vierde* (the fourth), they usually omit the two letters of the article *dat* (the) and say *dierste* (t'first), *dandere* (t'second), *derde* (t'third), *tfierde* (t'fourth), and so on in other syllables and words. Because the author [Ruusbroec] intended, however, to teach the complete truth perfectly, he wrote perfectly complete articles, words and sentences and books to the glory of God and our own beatitude.

Appendix Four: The Epilogue by the 'Descendant' (*Nacomelinc*)

MS D contains an epilogue by its anonymous compiler, who identifies himself only as a 'descendant of Ruusbroec's.' He also informs us that he studied Ruusbroec's works at Groenendaal and spoke to Ruusbroec's confreres. A number of hypotheses have been formulated about the identity of the author. Warnar (2007, pp. 313–324) agrees that the descendant was Jan Wisse, the superior of the monastery of Eemstein, though others disagree (see ibid., p. 314, note 43). The expression 'descendant' (*nacomelinc*) of Ruusbroec is unusual and must presumably be understood to mean that the author considered himself entirely in line with Ruusbroec's mystical-theological thought. This translation is based on the text as published in de Vreese (1900–1902, pp. 28–34).

In the name of eternal wisdom, from which all writings and truth come (for it is a clear mirror of God and of the angels and saints), I request, urge and recommend all lovers of the truth who read, copy or have books copied, that they carefully examine and faithfully correct the books or have them rectified and improved, at least on the basis of their exemplar. If the books are not corrected or revised completely, others must be borrowed or better still, many brought together, so that in some at least—either in one or another—the correct meaning can be found.

If they cannot extract the meaning from the exemplar, they may supplement it with words and place a mark above them, but they must also leave a small empty space under the section [of text] in case, later, the true meaning of the original author is found in another book.

In God's name, I venture to praise those who do this work in order for wisdom to be written and in order for the written wisdom to be corrected and safeguarded, to the improvement and edification of the Holy Church. By so doing, they do what is more pleasing to God and what honors him more, and they thereby also deserve more eternal reward than if they fail to do so. But instead, without the need or demand of holy nature, drink spring water and eat only bread, pray many Our Fathers or psalms without ardent attentiveness and prefer to go from place to place hoping to collect great piles of indulgences. Indeed, it is there [i.e., in the written truth] that God is especially known and proclaimed and that his glorious name is preached far and wide through the truth of texts that have been corrected.

> The living voice must perish;
> Written truth endures;
> It can travel the whole world,
> For it encompasses all times.

I am a descendant of the famous enlightened man Reverend John of Ruusbroec by whom, with the provost, the monastery of Groenendaal was founded. I was born in the monastery [presumably, entered the monastery] after his death and received by the whole community. For the above reasons, I have corrected—diligently and with all my assembled powers, to the extent that my clumsy coarseness allowed—this whole book and, one by one, all of the books in this collection of twelve, which I shall name individually below. I did so according to what I read in his books at the monastery, to what I heard from the most spiritual, most interior and most enlightened brothers among his disciples and followers, according to what I received elsewhere from the Scriptures or inwardly from God's mild grace, and according to the way I was able to understand and grasp it. I corrected them all very well and rightly according to what I have read and according to what I remember of our father's beautiful expositions, but also according to his own experiences and his desirable and inspiring way of life. Any words that I thought were forgotten or incorrect, I wrote above the text or beside the text in the margins and marked with symbols where the word should be or where it was missing between two other words. Furthermore, I explained his Brabantine or Latin words in the top margin using other words and occasionally made the meaning of his words clearer for simple people.

I indicated to which word the explanation corresponds using the same kind of stripes under the words that usually indicate corresponding explanations in the margin. Where words with the same meaning or explanations of the words or their meanings are written in the margin, these are my words that comment on his. They do not belong within the margins, in the text, but outside because they are about the text and about the words of the good man and are an explanation intended for those who do not understand his words or his meaning. Words that are not underlined with a stripe and everything above the text that is not underlined or is written in the margin do belong in the text.

The aforementioned father, the first prior of the aforementioned monastery, clearly shows the experience and the spirit he had in his writings. He guided all loving, interior, enlightened people, who practice interiority rather than exteriority. Such people turn outward to the works of obedience of brotherly love or they turn inward to God, to praise him, to desire him and to follow him with faithful, ardent love or to examine themselves and to reprimand, despise and destroy, and to die unto themselves by disdaining themselves and by having great esteem for God and praising him. They also pray for universal Christianity and they entreat and beseech God about every need. In everything and above everything, they contemplate God and desire him. And they are more imaged with God than with any works or modes, [God] for whom all works and modes are practiced, and search for him in everything and above all modes. These people feel strongly that the aforementioned books contain a heavenly rather than an earthly teaching, that they are more divine or angelic than human. Therefore, whoever shall taste this teaching must have more taste for the eternal than for the transitory. Yes, they must search for love more than for knowledge, and practice more that which love ignites than what reason enlightens, more what desire awakens than what knowledge transfers. Because the Holy Spirit moves to love more than to knowledge, more to passivity than to activity, more to being than to having.

That is why he commands us through the Prophet: 'Taste and See [Ps. 34 (33):9].' The dearest he mentions first because seeing rationally without tasting longingly does not please God, and this teaching moves and ignites desire most particularly, far more than it enlightens reason. That is why hungry souls become drunk from this wine very quickly and veritably ignited by this fire. But little remains to them in reason because those who are drunk soon lose their clarity of sight, but not their taste. Those who practice reason and make distinctions more than they transcend reason with love do not know this teaching and seldom appreciate it. Indeed, we are busy, laboring and imaged and thus we can neither understand nor remember the heavenly teaching. We would have to rest, above reason, in a marvelous, essential silence in order to receive this angelic experience and for this to image our mind, as is the case with other teachings

that do not transcend reason. Then our experience would be unimaged and we would rest in silence above reason. Indeed, as Isaiah says: 'God made all things according to weight, number and measure.'[29] Therefore, we must maintain right order and measure in all things except in love. Because, as Saint Bernard says: 'the measure with which to love God is without measure [*De diligendo Deo*].' The reason for this is that God is immeasurably good. He guides us in this age, and provides without measure. He wishes to make us rich in the future and in eternity and to pile up and make all the past measures overflow, and to give us himself, and to deify us above ourselves, and above all creaturely receptivity. In accordance with our capacity, he will crown us with all his goodness. That is why he commanded us, in accordance with all justice and just fittingness, to love him reciprocally with all our heart, all our soul, all our might and all our mind, which means, with all we have and all our capacities, with all our memory, all our intellect, all our will and all our desire. And yet, he rewards this service always without measure, so that in this service, he always serves us more with his overflowing exterior and interior gifts than we serve him, and in satisfying this debt, we receive such great, eternal, free noble goods from him. His service is so noble and so measurelessly honorable and so high that his servants and all his other creatures are lords and kings. Together, they are children of the almighty king, and they possess themselves and all the riches of their Father in eternal wealth, in peace, in glory and in honor.

When the loving soul beholds the unfathomable faithfulness of God with amazement, it desires to answer him with equal love and to love him in return endlessly and without measure. The soul's enlightened reason shows it—so clearly that it knows—that it is incapable of doing this. Indeed, a limited, fathomable creature cannot, in its incapacity, love its unfathomable Creator. And yet this knowledge cannot reduce it or quiet it or make it desist. It refuses to conform to its nature, but wants eternally to desire and to endure for him, in accordance with his eternal dignity. And yet it does not wish, in accordance with the insights of reason, to outrun him with its praise and service. When the soul reflects rationally, it does not want it to be possible to satisfy him, for this would imply that he is finite and fathomable, measured and defined. Everything that has an end, measure and number in its perfection can neither be sufficient nor can it entirely approach, grasp, fully know nor fully love that which is endless in all perfection.

Concerning these books, I will discuss the order that is necessary in all other things except love and its modes and especially its modelessness. Thus, readers or listeners can first obtain enlightened reason and be edified by the books that are based on distinctions and primarily teach conduct and a virtuous life or a life of reason, and with

29 This passage is in Wis. 11:20, not in Isaiah. It bears some relationship to Is. 40:12, however, and this may explain the apparent mistake.

their enlightened reason must be taught exteriorly. Through the books of experience, they can subsequently be led inside to taste and to experience and—above all interior activity—be led to rest in the being and, above union, to unity with the single being of God. I think perhaps it may be necessary, or at least very useful, for the reader to maintain the right order when reading and copying these books, so that they gradually ascend from the lowest rung of the faith to the highest rung of dying, self-denying love and there to fly up or descend and to melt and sink away in the beloved.

To begin, one should read *The Twelve Virtues*, after which the book on the twelve points of pure faith [*The Christian Faith*], after which the book on the Blessed Sacrament [*A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness*], after which *The Seven Rungs*, after which *The Seven Enclosures*, after which *The Four Temptations*, after which *The Spiritual Tabernacle*, after which *The Realm of Lovers*, after which *The Spiritual Espousals*, after which *The Sparkling Stone* and finally, the book which he apparently wrote after all these, namely, about the highest truth, which starts with 'the prophet Samuel mourned King Saul' [*The Little Book of Enlightenment*].

After these books, he wrote another work, *The Twelve Beguines*, which begins in verse and continues—in prose—with the suffering of Our Lord; it was written after this book [i.e., *The Little Book of Enlightenment*]—as far as I know—and that is why it was placed last in the book at Groenendaal, which contains all his works. One might read it after the little book *The Four Temptations*.

Burn and be burned up you all, in divine love, as you have been ignited by the above, and to which you are particularly and forcefully urged. You are roused to do this with determined, stirring words, and by the Spirit of the most pleasant truth that is most equal and beloved of God. It moves us to union with equality and from this union drives us to more intense unity and being one with the One in accordance with his modelessness. From the melting away in love, contemplation above images and irrational, hungry union, it leads to the divine, essential fire in which the soul is melted and has become one, above itself, with the enjoyable good—not in one nature but in enjoyment and in an experience without thought [*onghemerct ghevoelen*]. Indeed, in this modelessness, there is no thought [*ghemerc*], but it [i.e., thought] is in the union of the faculties, when they are united in the highest, and are constantly enlightened and see imagelessly from the point at which distinctions arise. There they know what they become or feel above themselves. Amen.


Hæc viuos vultus, atque ora simillima Diui
Jani de Leeuwis, picta tabella refert
Qui nullis licet excultus studiis, tamen ipso
Inspirante Deo, plurima scripta dedit.

ILLUSTRATION 3 *Portrait of Jan van Leeuwen, Anonynous, End 16th–Beginning 17th Century, Ruusbroecgenootschap, Antwerp*

Appendix Five: The Eulogy of John of Ruusbroec by Jan van Leeuwen

This eulogy of John of Ruusbroec was written by Jan van Leeuwen, a lay brother and the cook at the Priory of Groenendaal. As mentioned in the text, Ruusbroec was Jan van Leeuwen's confessor. The date of composition is unknown, but since Jan van Leeuwen died in 1378, it must have been written before Ruusbroec's own death. Henricus Pomerius consulted this text while writing his history of the Priory of Groenendaal. The text was transmitted in two manuscripts (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 3416–24, siglum D, and Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2412–13, siglum H). Unless otherwise indicated, this translation is based on the text of MS H as it appears in de Vreese (1895, pp. 253, 255–256). For more information about this text, see p. 49 in this volume.

Thus writes Brother John, the cook, about the good prior of Groenendaal, the first prior of Groenendaal.

Travel throughout the world or throughout Christendom and see how many upright, honest, spiritual people you can find—those who are enlightened by God without means and illuminated through God's highest unity. For I never saw any such person but one: Canon Regular, the Prior of Groenendaal; he was and is entirely filled with the wisdom of God, and I esteem his books and his holy, enlightened voice above all vernacular tongues. For I would never venture profoundly to esteem or to praise any upright person more than him alone, for in order to evaluate an upright person, one must know and discern how the person inwardly stands upright before God with unending service and unending praise. For people are worthy of honest esteem and spiritual praise to the extent that they love and cherish God; yes, the extent to which a person freely does and undergoes for God, outwardly and inwardly, all that which he is to do and to undergo.

Furthermore, we must go out of ourselves and out of all our individuality nakedly, through humble (*grontoetmoedich*) annihilation and descent of the self under the free will of God, so that God may rob and remove from us all our own, natural wretchedness. We must allow God to manifest himself and to act with us now and forever, so that no thing or event might be too burdensome or unbearable; indeed, neither death nor life nor torment, be it heavenly or hellish, whatever God or any other creature might send. Neither hellish pain nor heavenly joy, neither loss nor gain would concern an annihilating, humble (*grontoetmoedich*) person; neither the one nor the other, whatever tribulation or joy might befall him [or her].

For an annihilating, humble (*grontoetmoedich*) person cannot be encumbered or burdened with any load either outwardly or inwardly. But I tell you truly, that I have

never met nor known anyone who could say any more about annihilating humility (*grontoetmoedicheit*), whether great or small, than Reverend John of Ruusbroec, my dear honorable confessor, the Canon Regular Prior of Groenendaal: from him alone and from his sacred, honorable writings, which are entirely graciously dictated and inspired by the Holy Spirit, completely consonant with the Holy Church. Look now, I can praise this good, holy man more than everybody in the world together, but certainly I do not dare to praise or evaluate his life or his holy conduct, for I will fall short. His holy teaching, however, bears witness and publicly proclaims how and in which ways he was a leading example for us and a true mirror of holy life. But he himself lived far more nobly and more profoundly and more highly than he could teach us to do. For his words and his cherished writings do not reflect his inner life, but his life itself shows us his worth. In the same way, you should know that all waters and all rivers in the beginning of their first source flow from the wild sea and flow back to the sea.[30] Thus also was this good, holy man's life well and honorably ordered towards God, himself and his fellow humans,[31] through divine charity towards all people. For he gave his spirit freely and singly to God. And this was and is still his first and highest sacrifice with which he pleases God in the first signs of his soul's ascent, like all God's saints. The other sign with which he greatly pleased God was, as I mentioned before, his gracious, annihilating humility (*grontoetmoedicheit*). For he was and is still self-annihilating under God and under all people unto death. For through his annihilating humility (*grontoetmoedicheit*), God himself came to him with all his saints and with the nine choirs of angels. And thus, with all the glory that God can summon and display, God revealed himself to this good, holy man. For it is particularly through his annihilating, submitting humility (*grontoetmoedicheit*) that my dear confessor Reverend John of Ruusbroec received his great holiness. Indeed, and also through his noble, glorious teaching which he has sown and spread throughout the world, to God's eternal praise and to remedy the spiritual need of all people. For I do not know—nor could I ever know—anything better or more blessed thing than to be annihilated or to desire to be annihilated through the humility that makes our ground sink away (*gront ontsinkende oetmoedicheit*). For it is through our annihilating humility (*grontoetmoedicheit*) that

30 Cf. *Stone* E509–513: 'This sinking away is like the rivers which always flow into the sea, without ceasing and without turning back, for that is their proper place. And in a similar manner, when we possess God alone, our essential sinking away into habitual love always flows without turning back into an unfathomable feeling we possess and which is our own.'

31 MS H reads 'fellow Christians.'

God annihilates himself to us, and thus we draw God into ourselves, Spirit with spirit. May God grant us that we draw him thus. Amen.

I was told these truths about the prior.

I heard from Jan van Schoonhoven that he had heard and knew about the prior that the provost had once forbidden him from celebrating Mass without his permission, because a brother who had served him at Mass had said that he was becoming too weak to celebrate Mass and that it was not good, because he had seen him very weak at Mass. When the provost had heard this and the prior came to him, he said to him: 'Reverend John of Ruusbroec, Prior, you are no longer permitted to celebrate mass.' And the good prior asked him: 'Why Father?' Then the provost answered him: 'Reverend John, Prior, I was told that you are becoming too weak to celebrate Mass, and that you might faint.' Then the good prior answered him: 'Alas! Good Father, do not forbid me this.' Then the provost said: 'Good Prior, it is better left alone than done, in case you become too weak.' Then the prior answered: 'No Father, do not forbid me from celebrating Mass because I am not too weak.' Then the provost answered: 'No, Reverend John? Then why was I told this?' 'Father, I will tell you, so that I am not robbed of my happiness, because the task of celebrating Mass is my glory and bliss, joy, happiness and honor. Do not think that I become weak during Mass, for it strengthens me. When the person who told you about it thought I was weak, I was strong and able, and God was at my disposal.

For Our Lord Himself came and revealed Himself to me, and filled me with ineffable glory and happiness. He filled my heart with so much happiness and joy that I was imaged and filled, and appeared completely powerless. The person who informed you of it mistook this for a weakness I was suffering, but it was nothing other than I what I have just told you. For this reason, do not forbid me to celebrate Mass, for in it Our Lord reveals and shows himself to me thus, and fills my heart with glory and happiness. It would distress me to have to stop.'

Behold, when the good, holy Revered John of Ruusbroec, the prior, had thus answered the provost, his father, the provost responded saying: 'Prior, I am overjoyed that you wish to continue celebrating Mass, if you wish to do so without seeking my consent. And I thank the Good Lord who visits and gladdens you so much with his groundless mercy. And your annihilating humility makes you gain great virtuousness.'

Of the Good Prior of Groenendaal, Reverend John of Ruusbroec.

The aforementioned Jan van Schoonhoven, who knew the good prior of Groenendaal well and lived with him for many years and many days also told me about another good, holy man from Holland, who came to stay with the good prior, sometimes for a month or two or three, and sometimes even for half a year. This good man, whose name was Master Geert Grote may rightly be called great, because he was a great cleric

and did great works, as many people know, and he is reputed throughout the world. This good man, Master Geert Grote, said that he considered the good, holy prior no less enlightened by the Holy Spirit than Saint Gregory, our Holy Father the Pope of Rome, due to what he felt about him. He often wanted to be with him and to see his practices and outward manner, and his teaching and sermons and his ground-annihilating humility (*grontvernietende oetmoedicheit*) because those who knew Ruusbroec had praised him highly and had described how he gained his great holiness through his ground-annihilating humility (*grontvernietende oetmoedicheit*). I will tell you more about Master Geert and the prior. Master Geert lived in Holland, and had heard about the prior and about his life, and he resolved in his heart that he wanted to travel to him, and to visit him. He journeyed to Groenendaal. When he arrived inside the gates, the good prior . . .

The following page in both manuscripts is blank, but the rest of the story of Grote's visit to Groenendaal is recounted by Pomerius in *De origine* (1885).

Bibliography

Ruusbroec Editions

For a comprehensive overview of the editions and translations of Ruusbroec's works, see the article by Guido De Baere in this volume. The following is a list of editions to which this *Companion* frequently refers:

Opera Omnia, 1: *Boecsken der verclaringhe*, ed. and introd. Guido de Baere, transl. Helen Rolfson (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf 20, 1, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 101) Tielt/Leiden, 1981, and Tielt/Turnhout, 1989.

Opera Omnia, 2: *Vanden seven sloten*, ed. and introd. Guido de Baere, transl. Helen Rolfson (English) (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 20, 2, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 102), Tielt/Leiden, 1981, and Tielt/Turnhout, 1989.

Opera Omnia, 3: *Die geestelike brulocht*, ed. Jos Alaerts, transl. Helen Rolfson (English), transl. Laurentius Surius (Latin, 1552) (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 20, 3, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 103) Tielt/Turnhout, 1988.

Opera Omnia, 4: *Dat rijcke der ghelieven*, ed. Jos. Alaerts, transl. Helen Rolfson (English), transl. Laurentius Surius (Latin, 1552) (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 20, 4, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 104), Tielt/Turnhout, 2002.

Opera Omnia, 5–6: *Van den geesteliken tabernakel*, ed. Thom Mertens, transl. Helen Rolfson (English), transl. Laurentius Surius (Latin, 1552), 2 vols (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 20, 5–6, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 105–106), Tielt/Turnhout, 2006.

Opera Omnia, 7–7A: *Vanden XII beghinen*. Vol. 7: *Prolegomena*, by M.M. Kors; vol. 7A: *Text and Apparatus*, ed. Mikel Mario Kors, transl. Helen Rolfson (English), transl. Laurentius Surius (Latin, 1552). 2 vols (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 20, 7–7A, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 107–107A), Tielt/Turnhout, 2000.

Opera Omnia, 8: *Een spieghel der eeuwigher salicheit*, ed. Guido de Baere, introd. Paul. Mommaers, transl. André Lefevere (English), transl. Laurentius Surius (Latin, 1552) (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 20, 8, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 108), Tielt/Turnhout, 2001.

Opera Omnia, 9: *Van seven trappen*, ed. and introd. Rob Faesen, transl. Helen Rolfson (English), transl. Laurentius Surius (Latin, 1552) (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons

Geestelijk Erf, 20, 9, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 109), Tielt/Turnhout, 2003.

Opera Omnia, 10: *Vanden blinkenden steen, Vanden vier becoringhen, Vanden kerstenen ghelove, Brieven*, ed. Guido de Baere, Thom Mertens & Hilde Noë, introd. Thom Mertens & Paul Mommaers, transl. André Lefevere (English), transl. Laurentius Surius (Latin, 1552) (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 20, 10, and Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 110), Tielt/Turnhout, 1991.

David (1858–1868) = Jan Baptist David & F.A. Snellaert (for vol. 6), eds, *Werken van Jan van Ruusbroec*. Vols 1 and 2: *Dat boec vanden gheesteleken tabernacule*; vol. 3: *Dat boec vanden twaelf dogheden*, *Die spieghel der eewigher salicheit*, *Van den kerstenen ghelove*; vol. 4: *Dat boec van .VII. trappen inden graet der gheesteliker minnen*, *Dat boec van seven sloten*, *Dat boec vanden rike der ghelieven*, *Dat boec van vier becoringhen*; vol. 5: *Dat boec vanden twaelf beghinen*; vol. 6: *Die chierheit der gheesteleker brulocht*, *Dat hantvingherlijn oft van den blickenden steene*, *Dat boec der hoechster waerheit* (Maetschappy der Vlaemsche Bibliophilen) 3rd series, nos 1, 4, 7, 9, and 12 (Ghent, 1858–1868).

Werken (1932–1934) = Jan van Ruusbroec, *Werken*, 4 vols, 1st ed. (Tielt 1932–1934). Vol. 1: Jan Baptist Poukens & Leonce Reypens (eds), *1. Het rijcke der ghelieven*, *2. Die gheestelike brulocht*; vol. 2: Desideer-Adolf Stracke (ed.), *6. Van den gheesteliken tabernakel*; vol. 3: Leonce Reypens & Maurice Schurmans (eds), *3. Vanden blinckenden steen*, *4. Vanden vier becoringhen*, *5. Vanden kerstenen ghelove*, *7. Vanden seven sloten*, *8. Een spieghel der eeuwigher salicheit*, *9. Van seven trappen*, *10. Dat boecsken der verclaringhe*; vol. 4: Jozef Van Mierlo (ed.), *11. Vanden XIJ beghinen*, *12. Vanden XIJ dogheden*.

In the 2nd ed. (Tielt 1944–1948), vol. 4 has partially different editors and different contents: vol. 4: Jozef Van Mierlo & Leonce Reypens (eds), *11. Vanden XIJ beghinen*, *12. De overblijvende werken* [The remaining works, i.e., the Letters and some ascribed works].

Primary and Secondary Sources

Alaerts (1969a) = Joseph Alaerts, 'Het "wezenlijke" in de zielsopgang naar de mystiek. Gebruik van de "wezenlijke" terminologie in het "Rijcke der ghelieven," tot aan de beschrijving van het mystieke verenigingsleven,' in: *Bijdragen* 30 (1969), pp. 279–297.

——— (1969b) = Joseph Alaerts, 'Het "wezenlijke" in het mystieke verenigingsleven. Gebruik van de "wezenlijke" terminologie in de beschrijving van het mystieke verenigingsleven, in het "Rijcke der ghelieven," ' in: *Bijdragen* 30 (1969), pp. 415–435.

——— (1973) = Joseph Alaerts, *La terminologie 'essentielle' dans l'oeuvre de Jan van Ruusbroec 1293–1381*, Lille 1973. [Thèse présentée devant l'Université de Strasbourg II le 22 juin 1972]

——— (1975a) = Joseph Alaerts, 'Een Middelnederlands handschrift met werken van Herp en Ruusbroec (Brussel, K.B., IV 37),' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 49 (1975), pp. 18–28.

——— (1975b) = Joseph Alaerts, 'La terminologie "essentielle" dans "Die Gheestelike Brulocht," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 49 (1975), pp. 248–330.

——— (1975c) = Joseph Alaerts, 'La terminologie "essentielle" dans "Die Gheestelike Brulocht" and "Dat Rijcke der Ghelieven," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 49 (1975), pp. 337–365.

——— (1985) = Joseph Alaerts, 'Invloed van Geert Grote op de tekstoverlevering van Ruusbroecs "Die geestelike brulocht," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 59 (1985), pp. 142–153.

——— (1987) = Joseph Alaerts, 'Een "Brulocht"-handschrift uit Sint-Truiden (Brussel, KB., II 2846),' in: *Opstellen voor dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag* (Miscellanea Neerlandica, 1), Leuven 1987, pp. 195–198.

——— (2000) = Joseph Alaerts, 'Ruusbroecs bezoek aan Herne en het "oorspronkelijke Groenendaalse verzamelhandschrift," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 74 (2000), pp. 193–196.

Albanès (1892) = J.H. Albanès (ed.), *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements*, vol. 15, Paris 1892.

Alzin (1958) = J. Alzin, *Ruysbroeck l'admirable* (Les écrits des saints), Namur 1958.

Ampe (1945) = Albert Ampe, 'Orde en wanorde in Ruusbroec's XII Beghinen,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 19 (1945) afl. 2, pp. 55–82.

——— (1950a) = Albert Ampe, *De grondlijnen van Ruusbroec's Drieëenheidsleer als onderbouw van den zieleopgang* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, XI), Tielt 1950.

——— (1950b) = Albert Ampe, 'De wezensinkeer Gods naar de leer van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 14 (1950), pp. 5–26.

——— (1951) = Albert Ampe, *De geestelijke grondslagen van den zieleopgang naar de leer van Ruusbroec* (*A—Schepping en christologie*) (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, XII), Tielt 1951.

——— (1952) = Albert Ampe, *De geestelijke grondslagen van den zieleopgang naar de leer van Ruusbroec* (*B—Genadeleer*) (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, XII), Tielt 1952.

——— (1953) = Albert Ampe, 'Bernardus en Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 28 (1953), pp. 143–179.

——— (1954) = Albert Ampe, 'Marginalia Lessiana,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 28 (1954), pp. 371–372.

——— (1956) = Albert Ampe, 'De vrijheid en de ootmoed bij Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 30 (1956), pp. 400–421.

——— (1956b) = Albert Ampe, 'De bestemmelinge van Ruusbroec's Spieghel en Trappen,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 30 (1956), pp. 43–82.

——— (1957a) = Albert Ampe, *De mystieke leer van Ruusbroec over den zieleopgang* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, XIII), Tielt 1957.

——— (1957b) = Albert Ampe, 'De structuur van de "eenicheit des herten" volgens Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 31 (1957), pp. 150–186.

——— (1957c) = Albert Ampe, 'De vroegste Ruusbroec-verspreiding in Engeland,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 31 (1957), pp. 395–415.

——— (1960a) = Albert Ampe, 'La théologie mystique de l'ascension de l'âme selon le Bienheureux Jean de Ruusbroec,' in: *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 36 (1960), pp. 188–201 and 303–322.

——— (1960b) = Albert Ampe, 'Les rédactions successives de l'apologie schoonhovienne,' in: *Revue d'Histoire ecclésiastique* 55 (1960), pp. 401–452 and 797–818.

——— (1964) = Albert Ampe, 'Kritisch onderzoek van enkele aan Ruusbroec toegeschreven teksten,' in: *Dr. L. Reypens-album*, Antwerp 1964, pp. 1–36.

——— (1967) = Albert Ampe, 'Geert Grote als vertaler van de "Twaelf dogheden" gehandhaafd,' in: *Handelingen der Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 21 (1967), pp. 5–16.

——— (1971) = Albert Ampe, 'De bestemmelinge van Ruusbroec's Spieghel en Trappen,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 45 (1971), pp. 241–289.

——— (1972) = Albert Ampe, 'Jean Ruusbroec (bienhereux),' in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* VIII (1972), pp. 659–697.

——— (1974) = Albert Ampe, 'Nieuwe inzichten in de Ruusbroec-ikonografie. Een schilderijencyclus. Nadere gegevens over graveurs en gravures,' in: *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten* (1974), pp. 7–71.

——— (1975a) = Albert Ampe, *Ruusbroec. Traditie en werkelijkheid* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, XIX), Antwerp 1975.

——— (1975b) = Albert Ampe, 'Reypens' vondst eener nieuwe vertaling van Ruysbroeck's Zeven Trappen of nieuw inzicht in Grote's Ruusbroec-vertalingen,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 49 (1975), pp. 133–172.

——— (1975c) = Albert Ampe, 'Is de textus receptus van Ruusbroec's Steen een tweede redactie?,' in: *Nederlands archief voor de kerkgeschiedenis* 56 (1975), pp. 235–252.

——— (1981a) = Albert Ampe, 'De iconografie van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec 1293–1381. Tentoonstelling 16 november–24 december 1981*, Antwerp 1981, pp. 35–41.

——— (1981b) = Albert Ampe, 'Ruusbroec in beeld. Schets van de iconografie van Ruusbroec,' in: *Vlaanderen* 30 (1981), afl. 182/183, pp. 181–186.

——— (1981c) = [A.A.], 'Leven,' in: *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 31–44.

——— (1981d) = [A.A.], 'Verering en iconografie,' in: *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 336–370.

——— (1981e) = [A.A.], 'Geschiedenis en iconografie van Groenendaal,' in: *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 435–440.

——— (1983) = Albert Ampe, 'Karel Doudelet en zijn Ruusbroec-voorstellingen,' in: *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten*, Antwerp 1983, pp. 261–292.

Andrés Martin (1975) = M. Andrés Martin, *Los recogidos. Nueva visión de la mística espanola* (*1500–1700*) (Publicaciones de la Fundación Universitaria Españiola, Monografías, 13), Madrid 1975.

Andriessen (1981a) = [J.A.], 'Drukken,' in: *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 133–135.

——— (1981b) = [J.A.], 'Nabloei en invloed tot omstreeks 1800,' in: *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 261–276.

——— (1984) = J. Andriessen, 'De invloed van Jan van Ruusbroec in en buiten de Nederlanden,' in: *De Brabantse mysticus Jan van Ruusbroec 1293–1381*, Brussels 1984, pp. 49–77.

Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus homo* (1963) = Anselme de Cantorbéry, *Pourquoi Dieu s'est fait homme*, texte latin, introduction, bibliographie et notes René Roques (Sources Chrétiennes, 91), Paris 1963.

Arblaster & Faesen (2012) = John Arblaster & Rob Faesen, '*Commune a tous par largesse de pure charité*: Common Love in Beatrice of Nazareth and Marguerite Porete,' in: *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 83 (2012), pp. 297–323.

——— (2013a) = John Arblaster & Rob Faesen, 'Mysticism with or without the Church? John of Ruusbroec's Conflict with the Clergy,' in: *Bijdragen. International Journal for Philosophy and Theology* 74 (2013), pp. 18–32.

——— (2013b) = John Arblaster & Rob Faesen, 'The influence of Beatrice of Nazareth on Marguerite Porete: *The Seven Manners of Love Revised*,' in: *Cîteaux. Commentarii Cistercienses* 64 (2013), pp. 41–88.

(d') Asbeck (1930) = M. d'Asbeck, *La mystique de Ruysbroeck l'Admirable. Un écho du néoplatonisme au XIVe siècle*, Paris 1930.

Auger (1892) = A. Auger, *De doctrina et meritis Joannis van Ruysbroeck*, Lovanii 1892. [Dissertation]

——— (1895) = A. Auger, 'Une doctrine spéciale des mystiques du XIVe siècle en Belgique. Ruysbroeck et "la vie commune," ' in: *Compte-rendu du troisième congrès scientifique international des catholiques tenu à Bruxelles du 3 au 8 septembre 1894. Deuxième section: Sciences religieuses*, Bruxelles 1895, pp. 297–304.

Axters (1937) = Stephanus G. Axters, *Scholastiek Lexicon Latijn-Nederlands*, Antwerp 1937.

——— (1950) = Stephanus G. Axters, *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in de Nederlanden*, vol. 1: *De vroomheid tot rond het jaar 1300* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 22), Antwerp 1950.

——— (1953) = Stephanus G. Axters, *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in de Nederlanden*, vol. 2: *De eeuw van Ruusbroec* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 23), Antwerp 1953.

——— (1957) = Stephanus G. Axters, 'De poëtische creatie bij de zalige Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 57 (1957), pp. 75–79.

——— (1960) = Stephanus G. Axters, *Geschiedenis van de vroomheid in de Nederlanden*, vol. 4: *Na Trente* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 25), Antwerp 1960.

——— (1962) = Stephanus G. Axters, 'Hagiographie et histoire, étude critique du cas Pomerius,' in: *Cahiers Bruxellois* 7 (1962), pp. 108–141.

——— (1964a) = Stephanus G. Axters, 'Ruusbroec, gelukzalige Jan van,' in: *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek*, I, Brussels 1964, cols 797–905.

——— (1964b) = Stephanus G. Axters, 'Hadewijch als voorloopster van de zalige Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Reypens-Album*, Antwerp 1964, pp. 57–74.

——— (1965) = Stephanus G. Axters, 'Nederlandse mystieken in het buitenland, van Rupert van Deutz tot Ruusbroec,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* 1965, pp. 163–325.

——— (1973) = Stephanus G. Axters, 'Toenemende belangstelling voor de zalige Jan van Ruusbroec onder Franse lezers,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* 1973, pp. 65–84.

(De) Baere (1969) = Guido de Baere, 'Dat boecsken der verclaringhe van Jan van Ruusbroec. Tekstuitgave als steekproef,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 43 (1969), pp. 97–170.

——— (1972) = Guido de Baere, 'Dat boecsken der verclaringhe van Jan van Ruusbroec. Opmerkingen bij de tekst van handschrift Vv,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 46 (1972), pp. 353–368.

——— (1984a) = Guido de Baere, 'Die neue Ruusbroec-Edition und ihr erster Band, das "Boecsken der verclaringhe," ' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 176–186.

——— (1984b) = Guido de Baere, 'Hoe Ruusbroec God ontmoet,' in: *De Brabantse mysticus Jan van Ruusbroec 1293–1381*, Brussels 1984, pp. 35–47.

——— (1985) = Guido de Baere, 'Het "ghemeine leven" bij Ruusbroec en Geert Grote,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 59 (1985), pp. 172–183.

——— (1987) = Guido de Baere, 'Een opvallende tekstgetuige van Ruusbroecs *Kersten Ghelove*. Het handschrift Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, II 280,' in: *Opstellen voor dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag* (Miscellanea Neerlandica), Leuven 1987, pp. 199–205.

——— (1989) = Guido de Baere, 'De relatie van Surius' Latijnse vertaling van Ruusbroecs "Seven Sloten" tot de Middelnederlandse overlevering,' in: G.R.W.

Dibbets & P.W.M. Wackers (eds), *Wat duikers vent is dit! Opstellen voor W.M.H. Hummelen*, Wijhe 1989, pp. 139–146.

——— (1991) = Guido de Baere, 'Ruusbroec und kein Ende,' in: *Gerritsen, van Gijsen & Lie* (1991), pp. 16–17.

——— (1992) = Guido de Baere, 'Die neue Ruusbroec-Edition,' in: *Studies in Spirituality* 2 (1992), pp. 269–287.

——— (1993a) = Guido de Baere, 'Ruusbroecs "Spieghel" in de Latijnse vertaling van Geert Grote,' in: Thom Mertens, *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Middelnederlands geestelijk proza*, Amsterdam 1993, pp. 156–170; 413–417.

——— (1993b) = Guido De Baere, 'De *Mengeldichten* of Hadewijch met een janusgezicht' in: *Millenium*: *Tijdschrift voor middeleeuwse studies* 7 (1993), pp. 40–51.

——— (1995) = Guido de Baere, 'De ontplooiing van Ruusbroecs mystieke terminologie in de "Brulocht," ' in: Thom Mertens (ed.), *Siet, de brudegom comt. Facetten van 'Die geestelike brulocht' van Jan van Ruusbroec* (*1293–1381*), Kampen 1995, pp. 21–36; 83–85.

——— (1996a) = Guido de Baere, 'Een Latijnse deelvertaling van Ruusbroecs *Tabernakel* in handschrift Wenen, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, series nova 12.899,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 70 (1996), pp. 143–156.

——— (1996b) = Guido de Baere, ' "Cristus een ghieregh slockard" of de wansmaak van Ruusbroec,' in: Karel Porteman, Werner Verbeke & Frank Willaert (eds), *Tegendraads genot. Opstellen over de kwaliteit van middeleeuwse teksten*, Leuven 1996, pp. 83–92.

——— (1998) = Guido de Baere, 'Grensverkeer: Ruusbroec in China,' in: *Nederlandse letterkunde* 3 (1998), pp. 384–386.

——— (2000a) = Guido de Baere, 'De editie van Ruusbroecs Opera Omnia in wording. Bij het verschijnen van *Vanden XII beghinen*,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 74 (2000), pp. 255–263.

——— (2000b) = Guido de Baere, 'Van Groenendaal anno 1359 naar Utrecht anno 2000. De tekstuitgever als bruggenbouwer,' in: Ria Jansen-Sieben (ed.), *Medioneerlandistiek. Een inleiding tot de Midddelnederlandse letterkunde*, Hilversum 2000, pp. 305–316.

(De) Baere & Faesen (1999) = Guido de Baere & Rob Faesen, 'Jan van Ruusbroec in Beijing (vervolg),' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 73 (1999), pp. 73–91.

Baers (1960) = J. Baers, *De gaven van de Heilige Geest in de mystieke leer van Johannes Ruusbroec*, Leuven 1970.

Baert & Fraeters (2005) = Barbara Baert & Veerle Fraeters (eds), *Het wellende water* (Symbolae Facultatis litterarum et philosophiae Lovaniensis. Series B; 34), Leuven 2005.

Bardy (1950) = Gustave Bardy, "Trinité. La révélation du mystère: Écriture et tradition," in: *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 15 (1950), cols 1545–1702.

Bastings (1991) = A.M. Bastings, 'Maerlants "Der naturen bloeme" als bron voor Ruusbroecs "Van den geesteliken tabernakel," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 65 (1991), pp. 31–38.

——— (1995) = A.M. Bastings, 'Edelstenen bij Maerlant en Ruusbroec,' in: *Scientiarum historia* 21 (1995), afl. 2, pp. 89–98.

Bazire & Colledge (1957) = *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*. Edited from the manuscripts by Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge, Oxford 1957.

Beatrijs, *Seven manieren* (1926) = Beatrijs van Nazareth, *Seven manieren van minne*, ed. L. Reypens & J. Van Mierlo (Leuvense studiën en tekstuitgaven, 11) Leuven 1926.

Beauchamp (1998) = La Rédaction [= Paul Beauchamp, e.a.], 'Filioque,' in: *Dictionnaire critique de théologie* (1998), cols 467–469.

Beccarisi, Imbach & Porro (2008) = Alessandra Beccarisi, Ruedi Imbach & Pasquale Porro (eds), *Per perscrutationem philosophicam. Neue Perspektiven der mittelalterlichen Forschung. Zum 60. Geburstag Loris Sturlese gewidmet*, Hamburg 2008.

Beckers (1981) = Hartmut Beckers, "Godeverd van Wevele," in: *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 3, Berlin/New York 1981, cols 74–76.

Behiels (2010) = Lieve Behiels, 'De Spaanse Ruusbroecvertaling van Blas López,' in: Schepers & Hendrickx (2010), pp. 167–192.

Bekaert (2011) = Edward Bekaert, 'The Mystical Dimension in Flemish Primitive Painting. Exploring the Affinity between John of Ruusbroec and Rogier van der Weijden,' in: *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 82 (2011), pp. 333–392.

Bell (1984) = David N. Bell, *The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of St Thierry* (Cistercian Fathers Series, 78), Kalamazoo 1984.

Bergen (1937) = Jan Bergen, 'Ootmoedigheid naar Ruusbroec,' in: *Collectanea mechliniensia* 26 (1937), pp. 171–193.

(Van den) Berghe (1949) = F. van den Berghe, 'De invloed van Petrus Comestor op de Schriftuurverklaring van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België* (Klasse der Letteren, deel XI, nr. 10), Brussels 1949.

Bernard of Clairvaux, *Super cantica* (1958) = Bernardus Claravallensis, 'Sermones super cantica canticorum 36–86,' in: *Opera omnia* 2, ed. Jean Leclercq, C.H. Talbot & Henri Rochais, Rome 1958.

Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo Deo* (1963) = Bernardus Claravallensis, 'De diligendo Deo,' in: *Opera omnia* 3: *Tractatus et opuscula*, ed. Jean Leclercq & Henri Rochais, Rome 1963, pp. 119–154.

Beuken (1946) = W.H. Beuken, *Ruusbroec en de middeleeuwse mystiek*, Utrecht/Brussels 1946.

——— (1951) = W.H. Beuken, *Heilige dronkenschap. Jan van Ruusbroec, de godschouwer van het Soniënbos*, Arnhem 1951.

——— (1976) = W.H. Beuken, *Ruusbroec de Wonderbare. Bloemlezing van fragmenten in de oorspronkelijke tekst met inleiding en aantekeningen*, 2nd ed. (Klassieken der Nederlandse Letterkunde), Culemborg 1976.

Beyer de Ryke (1999) = Benoît Beyer de Ryke, 'Ruusbroec et la "Devotio Moderna": un courant mystique anti-intellectualiste à l'automne du Moyen Âge,' in: *Villers* 16 (1999), afl. 12, pp. 5–10.

——— (2000) = Benoît Beyer de Ryke, 'Une filiation ambiguë: Ruusbroec et la "devotio moderna" (XIVe–XVe siècles),' in: idem, *Maître Eckhart: une mystique du détachement*, Bruxelles 2000, pp. 108–114 ; 168–170.

Birrell (1976) = T.A. Birrell, 'English Catholic Mystics in Non-Catholic Circles,' in: *The Downside Review* 94 (1976), pp. 60–81; 99–117; 213–231.

Blas López (1696–1698) = *Traducción de las obras del iluminado doctor y venerable padre D. Juan Rusbroquio* [...] *en* [...] *castellana con adiciones por el padre Blas López*, 3 vols, Madrid, 1696–1698.

Blijlevens (2011) = Klaas Blijlevens, *Groeien in Gods liefde. Ruusbroec wijst de weg*, Antwerp 2011.

Blommestijn (1987) = Hein Blommestijn, 'Groeien naar volwassen liefde—Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Speling* 39 (1987), afl. 4, pp. 96–104.

——— (1990) = Hein Blommestijn, 'Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)—Leerproces van de liefde,' in: *Kruispunten in de mystieke traditie. Tekst en context van Meester Eckhart, Jan van Ruusbroec, Teresa van Avila en Johannes van het Kruis*. Gekozen, vertaald en ingeleid door dr. H.H. Blommestijn en dr. F.A. Maas, 's-Gravenhage 1990, pp. 73–104.

——— (1992) = Hein Blommestijn, 'Initiation into Love: The Mystical Process According to John Ruusbroec (1293–1381),' in: *Studies in Spirituality* 2 (1992), pp. 99–126.

Boeckmans (1979) = Jef Boeckmans, *'Minne en mach niet ledich sijn.' Die Gestalt der christlichen Beschauung nach Ruusbroecs 'Vanden blinckenden steen*,' Fribourg 1979.

——— (1980) = Jef Boeckmans, 'Mystik als Bewusstseinsprozess und als Gemeinschaft der Liebe. Zum Problem der natürlichen Mystik bei Ruusbroec,' in: Alois M. Haas (e.a.), *Das 'einig Ein': Studien zu Theorie und Sprache der deutschen Mystik*, Freibourg 1980, pp. 417–443.

Böhringer (1855) = Fr. Böhringer, 'Johannes Rusbroek,' in: *Die deutschen Mystiker des vierzehnten und fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Zürich 1855, pp. 442–611.

Bonny (1982) = Johan Bonny, 'Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *La Vie Spirituelle* 62 (1982), pp. 666–694.

——— (1988) = Johan Bonny, *Het 'Ghemeyne Leven' in de Werken van Jan van Ruusbroec*. I. Tekst. II. Voetnoten-Annexen. Verhandeling tot het behalen van de graad van Doctor in de Theologie. Rome, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana: Institutum Spiritualitatis, 1988. [Dissertation]

——— (2004) = Johan Bonny, '"Onderscheet ende anderheit" bij Ruusbroec,' in: Deblaere (2004a), pp. 375–388.

Boon (2003) = Jessica A. Boon, 'Trinitarian Love Mysticism: Ruusbroec, Hadewijch, and the Gendered Experience of the Divine,' in: *Church history* 72 (2003), pp. 484–503.

Bos & Warnar (1993) = E.P. Bos & Geert Warnar, *Een claer verlicht man: over het leven en werk van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)* (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 38), Hilversum 1993.

Bouman (1922) = A.C. Bouman, 'Johannes Ruusbroec en de Duitsche mystiek (I),' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde* 41 (1922), pp. 1–23.

Bouwman & Warnar (1994) = A.Th. Bouwman & G. Warnar, 'Willem de Vreese en de Ruusbroec-handschriften,' in: *Tijdschrift Voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 110 (1994), pp. 301–324.

Brandsma (1932) = Titus Brandsma, 'Groei en uitbloei van het mystieke leven volgens de H. Teresia en den Z. Joannes Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 6 (1932), pp. 347–370.

Bras (1993) = K.E. Bras, *Mint de minne. Eros en agape bij Jan van Ruusbroec*, Kampen 1993. [Dissertation]

Brooke (1959) = Odo Brooke, 'The Trinitarian Aspects of the Ascent of the Soul to God in the Theology of William of St Thierry,' in: *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 26 (1959), pp. 85–127.

Burger (1993) = Christoph Burger, 'De mysticus Ruusbroec en zijn kerk,' in: E.P. Bos & G. Warnar (eds), *Een claer verlicht man: over het leven en werk van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)* (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 38), Hilversum 1993, pp. 31–45.

Bynum (2002) = Caroline Walker Bynum, 'The Blood of Christ in the Later Middle Ages,' in: *Church History* 71 (2002), pp. 685–714.

(du) Cange (1884) = *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis conditum a Carolo du Fresne Domino du Cange* [. . .] *cum supplementis integris D.P. Carpenterii* [. . .]*, editio nova a Léopold Favre*, t. 3, Niort 1884.

Cawley (2003) = *Send Me God. The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of La Ramée, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers and Abundus, Monk of Villers, by Goswin of Bossut*, transl. Martinus Cawley, preface by Barbara Newman (Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts, 6), Turnhout 2003.

Ceulemans (2006) = Hadewijch Ceulemans, *Memorabele mystiek. De 'rationale'-passage uit Jan van Ruusbroecs 'Vanden geesteliken tabernakel'* (Antwerpse Studies over Nederlandse literatuurgeschiedenis, 13), Leuven 2006.

Chaix (1981) = G. Chaix, *Réforme et contre-réforme catholiques. Recherches sur la chartreuse de Cologne du XVIe siècle* (Analecta Cartusiana, 80), 3 vols, Salzburg 1981.

——— (1984) = G. Chaix, 'L'édition de 1552 et la réception de Ruusbroec au XVIe siècle,' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 142–152.

Chastising (1957) = *The Chastising of God's Children and The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, ed. J. Bazire & E. Colledge, Oxford 1957.

Chen (2011) = Jianhong Chen, e.a. (eds), *Lusibuluke ji qi shenmi zhuyi sixiang* (*daixu*) [Chinese translation of *Realm*, *Stone*, *Little Book*, *Enclosures*, *Mirror* and *Rungs*] (Hermes. Classici et commentarii), Shanghai 2011.

Claeys (1894) = H. Claeys, 'Jan van Ruusbroec's taal en stijl,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen der Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie 1894*, pp. 184–235.

Cockx-Indestege (1981) = E. Cockx-Indestege, 'Ruusbroecs werken in druk verspreid van de 15e tot de 19e eeuw,' in: *Vlaanderen* 30 (1981), afl. 182/183, pp. 176–180.

Cognet (1966) = Louis Cognet, *Histoire de la Spiritualité Chrétienne*. Vol. III. *La Spiritualité Moderne*, Paris 1966.

——— (1968) = Louis Cognet, 'Ruusbroec,' in: *Introduction aux mystiques rhéno-flamands*, Paris 1968, pp. 233–281. (also in German: 'Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: Louis Cognet, *Gottes Geburt in der Seele. Einführung in die deutsche Mystik*, Freiburg/Basel/Wien 1980, pp. 199–241.)

Colledge (1952) = Eric Colledge, 'The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God: A Fifteenth-Century English Ruysbroek Translation,' in: *English Studies* 33 (1952), pp. 49–66.

——— (1979) = E. Colledge, ' "De nobilitate anime" and "De ornatu spiritualium nupciarum": Bibliotheek Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, MS 5. F.34,' in: *Quaerendo* 9 (1979), pp. 149–159.

Colledge & Marler (1984) = Edmund Colledge and J.C. Marler, ' "Poverty of the Will": Ruusbroec, Eckhart and "The Mirror of Simple Souls," ' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 14–47.

Combes (1945a) = A. Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck par Gerson*, vol. I, *Introduction critique et dossier documentaire* (Études de théologie et d'histoire de la spiritualité, 4), Paris 1945.

——— (1945b) = A. Combes, 'Études gersoniennes, V. Gerson et Pomerius, La critique gersonienne de l'Ornatus spiritualium nuptiarum et la sincérité du premier biographe de Ruysbroeck, Henri Uten Bogaerde ou Pomerius,' in: *Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-Age* 14 (1943–1945), pp. 395–590.

——— (1948) = A. Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck par Gerson*, vol. II, *La première critique gersonienne du 'De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum'* (Études de théologie et d'histoire de la spiritualité, 5/1), Paris 1948.

——— (1959) = A. Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck par Gerson*, vol. III, *L'évolution spontanée de la critique gersonienne* (*première partie*) (Études de théologie et d'histoire de la spiritualité, 5/2), Paris 1959.

——— (1972) = A. Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck par Gerson*, vol. IV, *L'évolution spontanée de la critique gersonienne* (*deuxième partie*) (Études de Théologie et d'Histoire de la Spiritualité, 6), Paris 1972.

Cook (2000) = Barbara Gist Cook, *Essential Love: The Erotic Theology of Jan van Ruusbroec*, Chicago 2000. [Dissertation]

Cornet, Faesen, Schepers & Clemens (2010) = I. Cornet, R. Faesen, K. Schepers & T. Clemens (eds), *De Arnhemse mystieke preken in context = Ons geestelijk erf* 81 (2010), special issue.

Costard (1992) = Monika Costard, "Predigthandschriften der Schwestern vom gemeinsamen Leben. Spätmittelalterliche Predigtüberlieferung in der Bibliothek des Klosters Nazareth in Geldern," in: Volker Mertens & Hans-Jochen Schiewer, *Die deutsche Predigt im Mittelalter. Internationales Symposium am Fachbereich Germanistik der Freien Universität Berlin vom 3.–6. Oktober 1989*, Tübingen 1992, pp. 194–222.

(Van) Cranenburgh (1992) = H. van Cranenburgh, *De Geestelijke Tabernakel van Jan van Ruusbroec. Doorlichting van de bouw en cultus van de Tabernakel* (Mystieke teksten met commentaar, 6), Bonheiden 1992.

——— (1993) = H. van Cranenburgh, 'Gerechtigheid in de geschriften van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 67 (1993), pp. 34–52.

——— (1994) = H. van Cranenburgh, 'Gerechtigheid in de geschriften van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 68 (1994), pp. 8–29.

Cré (2006) = Marleen Cré, *Vernacular Mysticism in the Charterhouse. A study of London, British Library, MS Additional 37790*,Turnhout 2006.

——— (2010) = Marleen Cré, 'Take a Walk on the Safe Side: Reading the Fragments from Ruusbroec's *Die geestelike brulocht* in *The Chastising of God's Children*,' in: Schepers & Hendrickx (2010), pp. 233–246.

Crean (1966) = J.E. Crean, Jr., *Studies in Fourteenth Century Mystical Terminology. The Middle High German of Meister Eckhart and the Middle Netherlandic of Jan van Ruusbroec*, Connecticut 1966. [microfilm print]

——— (1969) = J.E. Crean, Jr., 'bilden/beelden in the Writings of Eckhart and Ruusbroec,' in: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Sprache* 25 (1969), pp. 65–95.

——— (1970) = J.E. Crean, Jr., 'Mystical "schauen" in Meister Eckhart and Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht, deutsche Sprache und Literatur* 62 (1970), pp. 37–44.

Dailey & Fraeters (2014) = Patricia Dailey & Veerle Fraeters, *A Companion to Hadewijch* (forthcoming), Leiden 2014.

Daniels (1932) = A.L.J. Daniels, *Les rapports entre saint François de Sales et les Pays-Bas 1550–1700*, Nijmegen 1932.

De origine (1885) = 'De origine monasterii Viridisvallis una cum Vitis B. Joannis Rusbrochii primi prioris hujus monasterii et aliquot coaetaneorum ejus,' in: *Analecta Bollandiana* IV (1885), pp. 257–322.

De Vreese (1962) = Willem de Vreese, 'De Dietsche boeken van 't Rooklooster omstreeks het jaar 1400,' in: Idem, *Over handschriften en handschriftenkunde. Tien codicolo-*

gische studiën. Bijeengebracht, ingeleid en toegelicht door P.J.H. Vermeeren, Zwolle 1962, pp. 61–68.

Deblaere (1960) = Albert Deblaere, 'Essentiel (superessentiel, suressentiel),' in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* IV-2 (1960), cols 1346–1366.

——— (1962) = Albert Deblaere, *De mystieke schrijfster Maria Petyt (1623–1677)* (Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde, VI[e] Reeks: Bekroonde werken, 87), Gent 1962.

——— (1980) = Albert Deblaere, 'La littérature mystique au Moyen Âge,' in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* X (1980), cols 1902–1919.

——— (2004a) = Albert Deblaere, *Essays on Mystical Literature—Essais de littérature mystique—Saggi sulla letterature mistica*, ed. Rob Faesen (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 177), Leuven 2004.

——— (2004b) = Albert Deblaere, 'Altniederländische Mystik,' in: Deblaere (2004a), pp. 91–96.

Déchanet (1942) = Jean-Marie Déchanet, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry: l'homme et son oeuvre*, Bruges 1942.

Denzinger (1976) = Heinrich Denzinger & Adolf Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, ed. 36 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1976).

——— (2001) = Heinrich Denzinger, *Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen*. Verbessert, erweitert, ins Deutsche übertragen und unter Mitarbeit von Helmut Hoping herausgegeben von Peter Hünermann, Freiburg im Bresgau, 2001.

Deschamps (1981a) = [J.D.], 'Handschriften,' in: *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 120–133.

——— (1981b) = J. Deschamps. 'De handschriftelijke verspreiding van Ruusbroecs werken,' in: *Vlaanderen* 30 (1981), pp. 171–175.

——— (1982) = J. Deschamps, 'De handschriftelijke overlevering van Ruusbroecs werken,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 1982, pp. 186–193.

Dier van Muiden (1719) = Rudolf Dier van Muiden, *Scriptum Rudolphi Dier de Muden de magistro Gherardo Grote*, in: Dumbar (1719), pp. 1–148.

(van) Dijk (2003) = Rudolf Th. M. van Dijk, *Prolegomena ad Gerardi Magni Opera omnia* (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 192), Turnhout 2003.

Dinzelbacher & Bauer (1988) = Peter Dinzelbacher & Dieter R. Bauer (eds), *Religiöse Frauenbewegung und mystische Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter*, Cologne 1988.

Dolezich (1924) = Gabriele A.M. Dolezich, *Johannes van Ruysbroeck. Studien zu seiner Persönlichkeit und seiner Lehre*, Breslau 1924.

——— (1926) = Gabriele A.M. Dolezich, *Die Mystik Jan van Ruysbroecks des Wunderbaren* (Breslauer Studien zur historischen Theologie, 4), Habelschwerdt 1926.

Dubois-Quinard (1959) = M. Dubois-Quinard, *Laurent de Paris. Une doctrine du pur amour en France au début du XVIIe siècle* (Bibliotheca Seraphico-Capuccina, Sectio historica, XVII), Rome 1959.

Duclow (2000) = Donald F. Duclow, 'The Hungers of Hadewijch and Eckhart,' in: *Journal of Religion* 80 (2000), pp. 421–441.

Dumbar (1719) = G. Dumbar (ed.), *Analecta seu uetera aliquot scripta inedita* [...], vol. 1, Deventer 1719.

Dupré (1984) = Louis Dupré, *The Common Life: The Origins of Trinitarian Mysticism and its Development by Jan Ruusbroec*, New York 1984.

Dykmans (1940) = *Obituaire du monastère de Groenendael dans la Forêt de Soignes*, publié avec une introduction et des notes par Marc Dykmans (Académie Royale de Belgique: Commission Royale d'Histoire), Brussels 1940.

Eeghem (Van) (1953) = W. van Eeghem, 'Anthonis de Roovere's Lof vanden heyligen Sacramente (1457),' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde 1953*, pp. 561–592.

Eichler (1968a) = Wolfgang Eichler, *Jan van Ruusbroec, Van den blinckenden Steen in oberdeutscher Texttradition* (Kleine Deutsche Prosadenkmäler des Mittelalters, 4), München 1968.

——— (1968b) = Wolfgang Eichler, 'Jan van Ruusbroecs "Van den blinckenden Steen" in oberdeutschen Überlieferung,' in: *Würzburger Prosastudien* Bd. I, München 1968, pp. 199–214.

——— (1969) = Wolfgang Eichler, *Jan van Ruusbroecs 'Brulocht' in oberdeutscher Überlieferung. Untersuchungen und kritische Textausgabe* (Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 22), München 1969.

——— (1992) = Wolfgang Eichler, 'Zur Rezeption von Ruusbroecs "Geistlicher Hochzeit" in Oberdeutschland. Über das Entstehen und "Verlieren" einer Übersetzung im späten Mittelalter,' in: Rolf Brauer & Otfrid Ehrismann, *Mediävistische Literaturgeschichtsschreibung* (Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 572), Göppingen 1992, pp. 275–287.

(Van) Elslander (1959) = A. van Elslander, 'Een Ruusbroec-handschrift uit het Roklooster,' in: *Album Edgard Blancquaert. De gehuldigde aangeboden ter gelegenheid van zijn emeritaat door kollega's, vakgenoten en oud-leerlingen*, Tongeren 1959, pp. 467–472.

Emery (1979) = Kent Emery, 'The Carthusians, Intermediaries for the Teaching of John Ruysbroeck During the Period of Early Reform and in the Counter-Reformation,' in: *Miscellanea cartusiensia* 4 (= *Analecta cartusiana*, 43), Salzburg 1979, pp. 100–129.

——— (1991) = Kent Emery Jr., *Dionysii Cartusiensis Opera Selecta. Prolegomena. Bibliotheca Manuscripta*, I, A-B, *Studia Bibliographica* (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Medievalis, 121 & 121A), Turnhout 1991.

Enrique del Sagrado Corazón (1950) = Enrique del Sagrado Corazón, 'Jan van Ruusbroec como fuente de influencia posible en S. Juan de la Cruz,' in: *Revista de espiritualidad* 9 (1950), pp. 288–309; 422–442.

Épiney-Burgard (1970) = Georgette Épiney-Burgard, *Gérard Grote (1340–1384) et les débuts de la dévotion moderne* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte Mainz, 54), Wiesbaden 1970.

——— (1984a) = Georgette Épiney-Burgard, 'La critique d'Eckhart par Ruusbroec et son disciple Jean de Leeuwen,' in: *Von Meister Dietrich zu Meister Eckhart,* Hrsg. v. K Flasch (Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi. Beiheft 2), Hamburg 1984, pp. 177–185.

——— (1984b) = Georgette Épiney-Burgard, 'L'influence des béguines sur Ruusbroec,' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 68–85.

——— (1998) = Georgette Epiney-Burgard, 'La Glose du 'Paternoster' de Gérard Appelmans. Texte pré- ou post-eckhartien?' in: Emilie Zum Brunn (ed.), *Voici Maître Eckhart*, Grenoble 1998, pp. 119–133.

Erb (1984) = P.C. Erb, 'The use of Ruusbroec among German Protestants,' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 153–175.

Erkens (1981a) = Michel Erkens, 'Bevat de oudst gekende originele akte van Groenendaal een eigentijds portret van Jan van Ruusbroec?,' in: *Zoniën* 5 (1981), pp. 98–107.

——— (1981b) = Michel Erkens, 'Het einde en de overblijfselen van de priorij,' in: *Zonien* 5 (1981), pp. 219–244.

——— (1981c) = Michel Erkens, 'De geschiedenis van de priorij Groenendaal,' in: *Eigen Schoon en de Brabander* 64 (1981), pp. 247–270.

——— (1993) = Michel Erkens, 'Aspecten van het dagelijkse leven te Groenendaal,' in: *Ruusbroec. De luister van Groenendaal*, Brussels 1993, pp. 55–76.

Faesen (1998) = Rob Faesen, 'Jan van Ruusbroec in Beijing,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 72 (1998), pp. 203–216.

——— (1999) = Rob Faesen, 'Mystiek en hagiografie: Hoe benadert de anonieme auteur van de Vita Beatricis het verschijnsel mystiek?,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 73 (1999), pp. 97–110.

——— (2000) = Rob Faesen, 'Anonieme teksten in een Ruusbroec-handschrift (Averbode, Archief IV 101, olim Bibliotheek 101 F3),' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 74 (2000), pp. 197–210.

——— (2001) = Rob Faesen, 'Een boem die hadde wortele op wert ende den tsop neder wert. Een mystieke boom bij Hadewijch en Ruusbroec,' in: Barbara Baert & Veerle Fraeters, *Aan de vruchten kent men de boom. De boom in tekst en beeld in de middeleeuwse Nederlanden*, Leuven 2001, pp. 48–65.

——— (2004a) = Rob Faesen, 'As a Lover with His Beloved. The Reaction of the Earliest Forms of Middle Dutch Mysticism to the Separation of Theology and Spirituality,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf 78* (2004), pp. 329–344.

——— (2004b) = Rob Faesen, 'Was Hadewijch a Beguine or a Cistercian? An Annotated Hypothesis,' in: *Cîteaux*: *Commentarii Cistercienses* 55 (2004), pp. 47–64.

——— (2007) = Rob Faesen, *Jan van Ruusbroec. Contemplatief theoloog in een moeilijke tijd*, Kampen 2007.

——— (2010) = Rob Faesen, '*Dupliciter intelligi potest*. Jan van Ruusbroec in the First Century of the Society of Jesus (1540–1640),' in: Schepers & Hendrickx (2010), pp. 285–307.

——— (2013a) = Rob Faesen, '"Poor in Ourselves and Rich in God": Indwelling and Nonidentity of Being (*wesen*) and Suprabeing (*overwesen*) in John of Ruusbroec,' in *Medieval Mystical Theology. Journal of the Eckhart Society* 21.2 (2012), pp. 147–169.

——— (2013b) = Rob Faesen, 'Ruusbroec at the Charterhouse of Herne: How did the Carthusians React to the Eckhart-Shock?' in: Gaens & Molvarec (2013), pp. 107–125.

——— (forthcoming) = Rob Faesen, '"We Were Perplexed By What He Wrote": The Carthusians and a Crucial Moment in the Development of Mystical Literature in the Low Countries,' in: Nissen & Pansters (forthcoming).

Feys (1991) = J. Feys, 'Ruusbroec and his False Mystics,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 65 (1991), afl. 2–3, pp. 108–124.

Fraling (1967) = Bernhard Fraling, *Der Mensch vor dem Geheimnis Gottes. Untersuchungen zur geistlichen Lehre des Jan van Ruusbroec* (Studien zur Theologie des geistlichen Lebens, 2), Würzburg 1967.

——— (1974) = B. Fraling, *Mystik und Geschichte. Das 'ghemeyne leven' in der Lehre des Jan van Ruusbroec* (Studien zur Geschichte der katholischen Moraltheologie, 20), Regensburg 1974.

Fredericq (1896) = Paul Fredericq, 'De geheimzinnige ketterin Bloemaerdinne (Zuster Hadewijch) en de secte der "Nuwe" te Brussels in de 14e eeuw,' in: *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, afdeling Letterkunde, reeks 3, deel 12, 1896, pp. 77–98.

Freeman (1959) = Donald Hubbard Freeman, *John of Ruysbroeck: His Mysticism and Influence upon Gerhardt Groote and John Tauler*, Boston 1959.

Gaens & Molvarec (2013) = Tom Gaens & Stephen Molvarec (eds), *A Fish out of Water? From Contemplative Solitude to Carthusian Involvement in Pastoral Care and Reform Activity* (Miscellanea Neerlandica, 41/Studia Cartusiana, 2), Leuven 2013.

(De) Ganck & Huyghebaert (1966) = R. De Ganck & N. Huyghebaert, 'Abbaye de Ter Doest,' in: *Monasticon Belge*, vol. 3/2, Liège 1966, pp. 317–351.

Geerardijn (1952–1954) = A.J. Geerardijn (ed.), *Joannes Ruusbroec, "Speculum aeternae salutis,"* Leuven 1952–1954 (unpublished, copy Ruusbroecgenootschap, Antwerp).

——— (1954) = A.J. Geerardijn, 'Drie handschriften van een vertaling van Ruusbroec's "Een spieghel der eeuwigher salicheit" en een handschrift van een vertaling van zijn "Van den blinckenden Steen," ' Leuven 1954 (unpublished, copy Ruusbroecgenootschap, Antwerp).

Gerard of Saintes & Hendrik Utenbogaerde (1981) = Gerard of Saintes & Hendrik Utenbogaerde, *De twee oudste bronnen van het leven van Jan van Ruusbroec door zijn getuigenissen bevestigd*. Uit het Middelnederlands en uit het Latijn vertaald door de Benedictinessen van Bonheiden. Ingeleid door P. Verdeyen, Bonheiden 1981.

Gerritsen, van Gijsen & Lie (1991) = W.P. Gerritsen, Annelies van Gijsen & Orlanda S.H. Lie (eds), *Een school spierinkjes. Kleine opstellen over Middelnederlandse artesliteratuur* (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 26), Hilversum 1991.

Gerson (1960) = Jean Gerson, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. P. Glorieux, vol. 2, Paris-Tournai 1960.

Giovanna della Croce (1960) = Giovanna della Croce, 'Johannes vom Kreuz und die deutsch-niederländische Mystik,' in: *Jahrbuch für mystische Theologie* 6 (1960), pp. 7–133.

——— (1984) = Giovanna della Croce, 'Ruusbroec,' in: *La Mistica: fenomenologia e riflessione teologica*, I, a cura di Ermanno Ancilli & Maurizio Paparozzi, Rome 1984, pp. 461–493.

Groot (1987) = Myriam Groot, 'De termen "inkeer-uitkeer" in Ruusbroecs geschriften,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 61 (1987), pp. 337–375.

Grote, *Trappen* (1911) = D. Ph. Müller (ed.), *Jan van Ruusbroeck, Van den .vii. Trappen, met Geert Groote's Latijnsche vertaling*, Leuven 1911.

Grote, *Epistolae* (1933) = Gerardus Magnus, *Epistolae*, ed. Willem Mulder, Antwerp 1933.

Grote, *Ornatus* (2000) = *Ioannis Rusbrochii Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis, Gerardo Magno interprete*, ed. R. Hofman (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 172), Turnhout 2000.

Groult (1927) = Pierre Groult, *Les mystiques des Pays-Bas et la littérature espagnole du 16e siècle*, Leuven 1927.

——— (1961) = Pierre Groult, 'Las fuentes germánicas de la mística española,' in: *Arbor* 181 (1961), pp. 23–39.

Gruijs (1974) = Albert Gruijs, "Jean de Schoonhoven," in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* VIII (1974), cols 724–735.

Guarnieri (1952) = R. Guarnieri, 'Per la fortuna di Ruusbroec in Italia. Le sorprese di un codice vaticano,' in: *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 6 (1952), pp. 333–364.

Gullik & de Veghel (1969) = Etta Gullik & Optat de Veghel, 'Herp (Henri de, Harpius)' in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* VII (1969), cols 346–366.

Gumbert (1987) = J.P. Gumbert, 'De datering van het Haagse handschrift van de Limburgse sermoenen,' in: Elly Cockx-Indesteghe & Frans Hendrickx (eds), *Miscellanea neerlandica: Opstellen voor dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag*, vol. 1, Leuven 1987, pp. 167–181.

——— (1990) = Peter Gumbert, *The Dutch and their Books in the Manuscript Age* (The Panizzi Lectures, 1989), London 1990.

Haag (1991) = W. Haag, *Christliche Mystik am Beispiel Jan van Ruusbroec und ungegenständliche Meditation (Zen). Versuch einer kritischen Erörterung im Hinblick auf eine im christlichen Rahmen geübte Meditationsform*, München 1991. [Dissertation]

Habel (1931) = E. Habel, *Mittellateinisch Glossar*, Paderborn 1931.

Hadewijch, *Brieven* (1947) = Hadewijch, *Brieven*, Jozef van Mierlo (ed.), vol. 1: Tekst en commentaar; vol. 2: Inleiding (Leuvense studiën en tekstuitgaven, 14), Antwerp 1947.

——— *Mengeldichten* (1952) = Hadewijch, *Mengeldichten*, Jozef Van Mierlo (ed.) (Leuvense studiën en tekstuitgaven, 15), Antwerp 1952.

——— *Liederen* (2009) = Hadewijch, *Liederen*, uitgegeven, ingeleid en toegelicht door Veerle Fraeters & Frank Willaert met een reconstructie van de melodiën door Louis Peter Grijp, Groningen 2009.

Hahn-Jooß (2010) = Barbara Hahn-Jooß, *Ceste Ame est Dieu par condicion d'Amour: Theologische Horizonte im Spiegel der einfachen Seelen von Marguerite Porete*, Münster 2010.

Haight (1991) = Roger Haight, 'Sin and Grace,' in: Francis Schüssler Fiorenza & John P. Galvin (eds), *Systematic Theology. Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 2, Minneapolis (MN) 1991, pp. 77–141.

Hart (1970) = *The Works of William of Saint-Thierry*, vol. II: *Exposition on the Song of Songs*, transl. Columba Hart (Cistercian Publications, 6), Spencer (MA) 1970.

——— (1980) = *Hadewijch. The Complete Works*, transl. Mother Columba Hart (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 1980.

Hatzfeld (1946) = Helmut A. Hatzfeld, 'The Influence of Ramon Lull and Jan van Ruysbroeck on the Language of the Spanish Mystics,' in: *Traditio* 4 (1946), pp. 337–397.

Hello (1912) = *Rusbrock l'Admirable* (*Oeuvres choisies*), transl. Ernest Hello, 2nd ed., Paris 1912.

Henriquez (1630) = Chrysostomos Henriquez, *Quinque prudentes virgines*, Antwerp 1630.

Henry (1952) = P. Henry, 'La mystique trinitaire du Bienheureux Jean Ruusbroec,' in: *Recherches de science religieuse* 40 (1951–1952), pp. 335–368.

——— (1953) = P. Henry, 'La mystique trinitaire du Bienheureux Jean Ruusbroec,' in: *Recherches de science religieuse* 41 (1953), pp. 51–75.

Heyrman (1910) = J. Heyrman, 'Jan van Ruysbroeck. Eene letterkundige studie,' in: *Jong Dietschland* 13 (1910), pp. 129–151.

Hill (1994) = Augustine, *The Trinity*, transl. Edmund Hill, New York 1994.

Hoenen (1993) = Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, ' "Een godlec ghevoelen dat boven redene es." Jan van Ruusbroec en Albertus Magnus, mystiek en filosofie,' in: E.P. Bos & G. Warnar, *Een claer verlicht man. Over het leven en werk van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)* (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 38), Hilversum 1993, pp. 47–57.

——— (2008) = Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, 'Translating Mystical Texts from the Vernacular into Latin. The Intentions and Strategies behind Laurentius Surius' Edition of John of Ruusbroec's Complete Works (Cologne 1552),' in: Beccarisi, Imbach & Porro (2008), pp. 348–374.

Horn, *Vita* (1909) = Petrus Horn, *Vita*, ed. W.J. Kühler, 'De "Vita Magistri Gerardi Magni" van Petrus Horn,' in: *Nederlandsch archief voor kerkgeschiedenis*, N.S. 6 (1909), pp. 323–370.

Hubbeling (1973) = H.G. Hubbeling, *Logica en ervaring in Spinoza's en Ruusbroecs mystiek* (Mededelingen XXXI vanwege het Spinozahuis), Leiden 1973.

Huijben (1922) = J. Huijben, 'Le bienheureux Jean Ruysbroeck. Son rôle et sa doctrine,' in: *La Vie Spirituelle. Ascétique et Mystique* 3 (1922), afl. 6, pp. 100–114.

——— (1927) = J. Huijben, 'Bartholomaeus Anglicus en zijn invloed,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 1 (1927), pp. 158–179.

——— (1931) = J. Huijben, 'Uit Ruusbroec's vriendenkring,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven-Werken*, Mechelen/Amsterdam 1931, pp. 101–150.

——— (1932) = J. Huijben, 'A travers les revues et les livres. Ruysbroeck et Saint Jean de la Croix,' in: *Études Carmélitaines* 17 (1932), pp. 232–247.

Idel & McGinn (1996) = Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn (eds), *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, New York 1996.

Jacques of Vitry, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis* (1867) = Jacobus de Vitriaco, 'Vita Mariae Oigniacensis,' ed. Daniel Papebroch, in: *Acta Sanctorum junii*, vol. V, Paris/Rome 1867, pp. 542–572.

Jansen (1943) = Ad. Jansen, 'De gebouwen en de kunstwerken van de priorij van Groenendaal,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 17 (1943), afl. 2, pp. 46–81.

Janssens (1981) = J.D. Janssens, 'Middeleeuwse "literaire" activiteit in de Augustijner-priorijen van het Zoniënwoud,' in: *Eigen Schoon en de Brabander* 64 (1981), pp. 317–367.

——— (1984) = J.D. Janssens, 'Jan van Ruusbroec in Brussels (1304–1343). Of: nog maar eens Ruusbroec en Bloemardinne,' in: *De Brabantse mysticus Jan van Ruusbroec 1293–1381*, Brussels 1984, pp. 1–33.

Javelet (1967) = Robert Javelet, *Image et ressemblance au XIIe siècle: De saint Anselme à Alain de Lille*, Paris 1967.

Jerome, *Epistola LVII* (1910) = Jerome, *Epistola LVII. Ad Pammachium de optimo genere interpretandi*, in: *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, ed. I. Hilberg, vol. 1 (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 54), Vienna/Leipzig 1910, pp. 503–526.

Jonckbloet (1881) = W.J.A. Jonckbloet, *Beknopte geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, 3rd ed., Groningen 1881.

Jordaens, *Mondkus* (1967) = Leonce Reypens (ed.), *Willem Jordaens. De Mystieke Mondkus*, Antwerp 1967.

Jordaens, *Conflictus* (1985) = L.J. Johnson (ed.), *Wilhelm Jordaens's Avellana. A fourteenth-Century Virtue-Vice Debate* (Speculum anniversary monographs, 9), Cambridge (Mass.) 1985.

——— (1986) = A. Önnerfors (ed.), *Willem Jordaens, Conflictus virtutum et viciorum* (Abhandlungen der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 74), Opladen 1986.

Jordaens, *De ornatu* (2004) = Kees Schepers (ed.), *Ioannis Rusbrochii De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum, Wilhelmo Iordani interprete* (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 207), Turnhout 2004.

Kalff (1906) = Gerrit Kalff, *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Letterkunde*, vol. 1, Groningen 1906.

Kern (1895) = *De Limburgsche Sermoenen*, J.H. Kern (ed.), (Bibliotheek van Middelnederlandsche Letterkunde, 46–48/50–53), Groningen 1895.

Kesteman (1984) = E. Kesteman, 'Ruusbroec en de Franse letteren,' in: *De Brabantse mysticus Jan van Ruusbroec 1293–1381*, Brussels 1984, pp. 79–86.

Kienhorst & Kors (1998a) = Hans Kienhorst & Mikel M. Kors, 'Corpusvorming van Ruusbroecs werken,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 72 (1998), pp. 3–53.

——— (1998b) = Hans Kienhorst & Mikel M. Kors, 'Fragment van een onbekend Ruusbroec-verzamelhandschrift,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 72 (1998), pp. 164–172.

——— (1998c) = Hans Kienhorst & Mikel M. Kors, 'Een studiereis naar Groenendaal. De "Nacomelinc" en de totstandkoming van Ruusbroec-handschrift D,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 72 (1998), pp. 221–245.

——— (2001) = Hans Kienhorst & Mikel M. Kors, 'De chronologie van Ruusbroecs werken volgens de Groenendaalse codex,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 75 (2001), pp. 69–101.

——— (2003) = Hans Kienhorst & Mikel M. Kors, 'Codicological evidence for a chronological rearrangement of the works of Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381),' in: *Quaerendo* 33 (2003), pp. 135–174.

Kikuchi (2008) = Satoshi Kikuchi, 'Christological Problems in the Understanding of the Sonship in Meister Eckhart,' in: *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie* 69, pp. 365–381.

Kloosterman (1935) = W.S.J. Kloosterman, 'Surius en Geert Groote: hun Latijnse vertalingen der "Zeven Trappen" van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 9 (1935), pp. 244–267.

Knuvelder (1970) = G.P.M. Knuvelder, *Handboek tot de geschiedenis der Nederlandse Letterkunde*, vol. 1, 5th ed., 's-Hertogenbosch 1970.

Koehler (1964) = Théodore Koehler, 'La théologie mystique de la "fruitio Dei" chez Ruusbroec l'Admirable,' in: *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 40 (1964), pp. 289–310.

Kok (1973) = Th. Kok, 'Jan Van Leeuwen en zijn werkje tegen Eckhart,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 47 (1973), pp. 29–172.

(van der) Kolk (2008) = Netty van der Kolk, *Gheraert Appelmans' Glose op den Pater Noster. An Exploratory Literary Investigation on a Remarkable Middle Dutch Mystical Text in the Context of Late-Medieval Spiritual Developments* [Thesis Research Master Medieval Studies, Utrecht University, 2008].

Kors (1998) = Mikel M. Kors, 'Ruusbroec als compilator. Het Leven van Jezus als bron voor Vanden XII beghinen,' in: *Nederlandse letterkunde* 3 (1998), pp. 58–74.

——— (1999) = Mikel M. Kors, 'Ruusbroecs Unvollendete. Tekstgeleding in de handschriften en de compositie van Van den XII beghinen,' in: *Nederlandse letterkunde* 4 (1999), pp. 330–346.

——— (2001) = Mikel M. Kors, 'Ruusbroec en de crisis van de mystiek,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 75 (2001), pp. 116–124.

(Van der) Krabben (1935) = P. van der Krabben, 'Beda als bron van "Van den Gheesteliken Tabernakel," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 9 (1935), pp. 382–387.

Kreuzer (1993) = G. Kreuzer, 'Nikolaus Seyringer,' in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 6 (1993), col. 1187.

Kwakkel (2002) = Erik Kwakkel, *Die dietsche boeke die ons toebehoeren. De kartuizers van Herne en de productie van Middelnederlandse handschriften in de regio Brussel (1350–1400)* (Miscellanea Neerlandica, 27), Leuven 2002.

Laenen (1910) = J. Laenen, 'L'iconographie du bienheureux Jean de Ruysbroeck,' in: *La Vie Diocésaine, Bulletin du diocèse de Malines* 4 (1910), pp. 81–86.

Latham & Howlett (1986) = R.E. Latham & D.R. Howlett, *Dictionnary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, Vol. I (A–L), fasc. III (D–E), Oxford 1986.

Lefèvre (1933) = Pl. Lefèvre, 'Le séjour du mystique brabançon Jean de Ruusbrooc à Bruxelles,' in: *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 29 (1933), pp. 387–398.

——— (1936) = Pl. Lefèvre, 'La valeur historique des écrits de Pomerius sur la vie de Ruusbroec et les origines de Groenendaal,' in: *Annales de la Société Royale d'archéologie de Bruxelles* 40 (1936), pp. 148–165.

——— (1942) = Pl. Lefèvre, *L'organisation ecclésiastique de la ville de Bruxelles au Moyen Age* (Recueil de travaux d'histoire et de philologie de l'Université de Louvain, ser. III, fasc. XI), Louvain 1942.

——— (1962) = Pl. Lefèvre, 'Encore Pomerius,' in: *Cahiers Bruxellois* 7 (1962), pp. 181–184.

Lemmens (1990) = Filip Lemmens, *De iconografie van Jan van Ruusbroec en Groenendaal*, Ruusbroecgenootschap (Bibliotheek, afdeling Prenten), Antwerp 1990.

Lerner (2010) = Robert Lerner, 'New Light on the Mirror of Simple Souls,' in: *Speculum* 83 (2010), pp. 91–116.

(De) Letter (1961) = P. De Letter, 'Trinitarian Indwelling According to Ruysbroeck,' in: *The Heythrop Journal* 2 (1961), pp. 48–54.

(de) Leturia (1957) = P. de Leturia, *Estudios Igniacianos*. Revisados por [. . .] I. Iparraguirre, II. *Estudios espirituales* (Bibliotheca Instituti Historici S.I., XI), Rome 1957.

Lieftinck (1932) = G.I. Lieftinck, 'Hendrik Mande als bewerker en compilator,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 51 (1932), pp. 201–217.

Lievens (1957) = Robrecht Lievens, 'De twee aan Ruusbroec toegeschreven liederen,' in: *Handelingen der Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 11 (1957), pp. 110–113.

——— (1960a) = Robrecht Lievens, 'De Origine Monasterii Viridisvallis van Pomerius. Een overzicht van de handschriften,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 34 (1960), pp. 209–215.

——— (1960b) = Robrecht Lievens, 'Ruusbroec-handschrift E,' in: *Spiegel der Letteren* 4 (1960), pp. 209–210.

——— (1960c) = Robrecht Lievens, 'Wie schreef de XII Dogheden?,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* 1960, pp. 233–236.

——— (1960d) = Robrecht Lievens, 'Bespiegelend proza uit handschrift Leningrad, Akademie van Wetenschappen XX I LXIII,' in: *Handelingen der Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 14 (1960), pp. 207–233.

——— (1964) = Robrecht Lievens, 'De eerste brief van Ruusbroec,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* 1964, pp. 211–222.

——— (1970) = Robrecht Lievens, 'De lijst der Dietse boeken van Rooklooster. Eén identifikatie en een interpretatie,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal en Letterkunde* 86 (1970), pp. 234–239.

——— (1980) = Robrecht Lievens, 'Lezenderwijs' (§17: 'De tweede brief van Ruusbroec'; § 18: 'De gevaren van affektie'), in: *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 34 (1980), pp. 203–221.

——— (1981) = Robrecht Lievens, 'Lezenderwijs' (§20: 'De vader van Ruusbroec'; §21: 'Ruusbroec: singerie'),' in: *Handelingen der Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis* 35 (1981), pp. 192–202.

——— (1983) = Robrecht Lievens, 'Ruusbroecs roemsce vaert,' in: R. Lievens, E. van Mingroot & W. Verbeke, *Pascua Mediaevalia. Studies voor prof. dr. J.M. de Smet*, Leuven 1983, pp. 383–397.

Lindeman (1931) = H. Lindeman, 'De bronnen van Ruusbroecs leven,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven-Werken*, Mechelen/Amsterdam 1931, pp. 42–59.

López-Baralt (2004) = Luce López-Baralt, 'Mystieke dynamiek op de top van de extase. Het *overwesen* van Ruusbroec, het "hart" van de H. Jan van het Kruis en het *qalb* van Ibn 'Arabï,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 78 (2004), pp. 194–223.

——— (2005) = Luce López-Baralt, 'El dinamismo místico en la suma del éxtasis: la *supraesencia del alma* de Rusbroquio, el *corazón* de san Juan de la Cruz y *qalb* de Ibn 'Arabï,' in: Miguel Norbert Ubarri & Lieve Behiels (eds), *Fuentes neerlandesas de la mística española*, Madrid 2005, pp. 81–112.

Löser (1999) = F. Löser, 'Nikolaus Seyringer von Matzen,' in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 19 (1999), p. 274.

Maeterlinck (1891) = *L'ornement des noces spirituelles, de Ruysbroeck l'Admirable, traduit du flamand et accompagné d'une introduction par Maurice Maeterlinck*, 2nd ed., Bruxelles 1891.

Maigne d'Arnis (1858) = W.-H. Maigne d'Arnis, *Lexicon manuale ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis*, Paris 1858.

Martens (1958) = Mina Martens, *Le censier ducal pour l'ammanie de Bruxelles de 1321* (Académie Royale de Belgique. Commission royale d'histoire. Publications in 8°), Bruxelles 1958.

——— (1990) = Mina Martens, 'Hedwige Blomart face au mystique Jean van Ruysbroec. Leurs milieux familiaux à l'épreuve des assertions de Pomerius, visant la Bloemardinne (1250-XVe siècle),' in: *Cahiers bruxellois* 31 (1990), pp. 1–105.

Martinelli Spanò (1973) = Serena Martinelli Spanò, 'Ruusbroec in Italia. In margine ai Domini Ioannis Ruisbroici Canonici Regularis libelli duo: un'edizione bolognese del 1538,' in: *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 9 (1973), pp. 445–456.

Massaut (1963) = J.-P. Massaut e.a., 'France. V. Le 16e siècle; VI. Le grand siècle de la spiritualité française et ses lendemains,' in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* V (1963), cols 891–953.

McGinn (1985) = Bernard McGinn, 'The Human Person as Image of God. II. Western,' in: McGinn, Meyendorff & Lerclercq (1985), pp. 312–330.

——— (1994) = Bernard McGinn, 'Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition,' in: *The Journal of Religion* 74 (1994), pp. 155–181.

——— (1996a) = Bernard McGinn, 'Love, Knowledge and *Unio mystica* in the Western Christian Tradition,' in: Idel & McGinn (1996), pp. 59–86.

——— (1996b) = Bernard McGinn, 'The Abyss of Love: The Language of Mystical Union among Medieval Women,' in: *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God. Studies in Honor of Jean Leclercq*, Kalamazoo 1996, pp. 95–120.

——— (1998) = Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God. A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, vol. 3: *The Flowering of Mysticism. Men and Women in the New Mysticism: 1200–1350*, New York 1998.

——— (2001) = Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing*, New York 2001.

——— (2005) = Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God. A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, vol. 4: *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (*1300–1500*), New York 2005.

——— (2006) = Bernard McGinn, 'The Significance of Ruusbroec' s Mystical Theology,' in: *Louvain Studies* 31 (2006), pp. 19–41.

——— (2007) = Bernard McGinn, 'The Dynamism of the Trinity in Bonaventure and Eckhart,' in: *Franciscan Studies* 65 (2007), pp. 137–155.

——— (2012) = Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God. A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, vol. 5: *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism*, New York 2012.

McGinn, Meyendorff & Lerclercq (1985) = B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, and J. Leclercq (eds), *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, New York 1985.

Meert (1891) = H. Meert, 'Het vers en het berijmd proza in de werken van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Nederlandsch Museum*, vierde reeks, 1 (1891), pp. 241–258.

——— (1901) = H. Meert, *Vormleer van de taal van Ruusbroec* (Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde, Reeks 6, nr. 26), Gent 1901.

Mertens (1990) = Thom Mertens, 'Epistolaire aspecten van Ruusbroecs Brieven,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 64 (1990), pp. 53–59.

——— (1991) = Thom Mertens, 'De geestelijke literatuur tussen theologie en filologie,' in: van Oostrom e.a. (1991), pp. 130–141, 218.

——— (1993a) = Thom Mertens, 'Ghescreven waerheit blivet staen. De receptie van Ruusbroecs werken,' in: E.P. Bos & G. Warnar, *Een claer verlicht man. Over het leven en werk van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)* (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 38), Hilversum 1993, pp. 73–82.

——— (1993b) = Thom Mertens, 'Omstreeks 1362: Jan van Ruusbroec bezoekt de kartuizers te Herne. De mysticus als schrijver,' in: M.A. Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen e.a. (eds), *Nederlandse literatuur, een geschiedenis*, Groningen 1993, pp. 58–61.

——— (1993c) = Thom Mertens, 'De uitstraling van Ruusbroec,' in: *Streven* 60 (1993), pp. 880–888.

——— (1994) = Thom Mertens, 'Ruusbroec in het buitenland,' in: *Lewe* 13 (1994), afl. 1–2, pp. 29–43.

——— (1995) = Thom Mertens, 'Het beeld van Ruusbroec in de Middelnederlandse handschriften,' in: Thom Mertens (ed.), *'Siet, de brudegom comt.' Facetten van Die geestelike brulocht van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)*, Kampen 1995, pp. 65–82; 91–100.

——— (1997) = Thom Mertens, 'Ruusbroec onder de godsvrienden,' in: Rita Schlusemann & Paul Wackers, *Die spätmittelalterliche Rezeption niederländischer Literatur im deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik, 47), Amsterdam 1997, pp. 109–130.

——— (2010) = Thom Mertens, 'De wetenschappelijke editie van Ruusbroecs werken in historisch perspectief,' in: Schepers & Hendrickx (2010), pp. 457–478.

(Van) Mierlo (1908) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Was Hadewijch de ketterin Blomardinne?,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 8 (1908), tweede halfjaar, pp. 267–286.

——— (1910a) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Het leven van Jan van Ruysbroeck door Pomerius en Surius,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 11 (1910), pp. 109–130.

——— (1910b) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Het leven en de werken van Jan van Ruysbroeck,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 11 (1910), pp. 255–282; 327–356; 423–452; 531–558.

——— (1910c) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Het leven en de werken van Jan van Ruysbroeck (Vervolg),' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 10 (1910), pp. 1–27; 119–146.

——— (1922) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Joannes Ruysbroeck en de Duitsche mystiek,' in: *Studiën. Tijdschrift voor Godsdienst, Wetenschap en Letteren* 54 (1922), dl. 98, pp. 439–467.

——— (1923a) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'De "Bruloft" van Ruysbroeck als voorbeeld der "Twaelf Dogheden" gehandhaafd,' in: *Studiën. Tijdschrift voor Godsdienst, Wetenschap en Letteren* 55 (1923), vol. 99, pp. 35–62.

——— (1923b) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Is het "Boec vanden Twaelf Dogheden" een werk van Jan van Ruysbroeck?,' in: *Studiën. Tijdschrift voor Godsdienst, Wetenschap en Letteren* 55 (1923), vol. 99, pp. 200–228; 376–396; vol. 100, pp. 133–145; 297–306.

——— (1925a) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Hadewijch een gelukzalige Bloemardinne?,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 25 (1925), pp. 28–49.

——— (1925b) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Een vergissing van Pomerius?,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 25 (1925), pp. 610–625.

——— (1925c) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Ruysbroeck in Frankrijk,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 25 (1925), pp. 714–721.

——— (1925d) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'De XII Dogheden geen werk van Ruysbroeck,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde* 44 (1925), pp. 165–184.

——— (1926a) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Een Duitscher over de Mystiek van Ruysbroeck,' in: *Studiën. Tijdschrift voor Godsdienst, Wetenschap en Letteren* 58 (1926), vol. 105, pp. 460–464.

——— (1926b) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Een hopeloos pleit,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 26 (1926), pp. 458–480; 580–594.

——— (1927a) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Hadewijchiana,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde*, 1927, pp. 195–225; 425–442.

——— (1927b) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Pomerius' betrouwbaarheid in zijn verhaal over den strijd van Ruusbroec tegen de Bloemardinne,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde*, 1927, pp. 443–466.

——— (1927c) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Over het ontstaan der Germaansche mystiek,' in: *Ons geestelijke erf* 1 (1927), pp. 11–37.

——— (1928a) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Encore Hadewijch et Bloemardinne,' in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 7 (1928), pp. 469–510.

——— (1928b) = reply to H. Nélis ('Correspondence') in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 7 (1928), pp. 867–869.

——— (1931) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Ruusbroec als prozaschrijver,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven en werken*, Mechelen/Amsterdam 1931, pp. 178–223.

——— (1932a) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Ruusbroec's bestrijding van de ketterij,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 6 (1932), pp. 304–346.

——— (1932b) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Ruusbroec in de Nederlandsche Mystiek,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 32 (1932), pp. 113–131.

——— (1932c) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Ruusbroec's kunst,' in: D.A. Stracke, J. van Mierlo & L. Reypens (eds), *Ruusbroec de Wonderbare. Zijn leven, zijn kunst, zijn leer*, [Leuven] 1932, pp. 73–112.

——— (1933) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'De Bloemardinne-episode in het leven van den gelukzaligen Joh. van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 7 (1933), pp. 305–340.

——— (1934) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Naar aanleiding van de Bloemardine-episode in het leven van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 8 (1934), pp. 224–225.

——— (1937) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Bloemardinne,' in: *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique* IX (1937), cols 207–212.

——— (1941) = Jozef van Mierlo, 'Uit de uitgave van het Obituarium van Groenendaal,' in: *Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde. Verslagen en Mededeelingen*, 1941, pp. 429–458.

Minnis & Voaden (2010) = Alistair Minnis & Rosalynn Voaden (eds), *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c.1100–c.1500* (Brepols Essays in European Culture, 1), Turnhout 2010.

Miraeus (1622) = [Aubertus Miraeus], *Elogia et testimonia uariorum de V. Joanne Rusbroquio Priore monasterii Viridis Vallis* [. . .], Brussels 1622.

Moereels (1974a) = Lode Moereels, 'Herp en Jordaens over de hoogste beschouwing op aarde,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 48 (1974), pp. 225–252.

——— (1974b) = Lode Moereels, 'Jordaens en Herp—Een belangrijke ontdekking,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 48 (1974), pp. 129–142.

——— (1977a) = Lode Moereels, 'Over de zuivere mening in het eerste boek van Ruusbroec's Brulocht,' in: *Ons geestelijk leven* 54 (1977), pp. 214–221.

——— (1977b) = Lode Moereels, 'Over de zuivere mening in het tweede en derde boek van Ruusbroec's Brulocht,' in: *Ons geestelijk leven* 54 (1977), pp. 269–277.

——— (1978) = Lode Moereels, 'Om Ruusbroec's Brulocht beter te begrijpen. Rol van de drie eenheden,' in: *Ons geestelijk leven* 55 (1978), pp. 233–248.

Mommaers (1971–1972) = Paul Mommaers, 'Benoît de Canfeld. Sa terminologie «essentielle»,' in: *Revue d'ascétique et mystique* 47 (1971), pp. 421–454; 48 (1972), pp. 37–68.

——— (1972–1973) = Paul Mommaers, 'Benoît de Canfeld et ses sources flamandes,' in: *Revue d'ascétique et mystique* 48 (1972), pp. 401–434; 49 (1973), pp. 37–66.

——— (1973) = Paul Mommaers, *Waar naartoe is nu de gloed van de liefde? Fenomenologie van de liefdegemeenschap volgens de mysticus Ruusbroec*, Antwerp 1973.

——— (1975) = Paul Mommaers, 'De mysticus en concrete, efficiënte actie,' in: *Kultuurleven* 42 (1975), pp. 553–567.

——— (1976) = Paul Mommaers, 'Eénzijn-met-God volgens Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Communio* 1 (1976), pp. 454–462.

——— (1981a) = Paul Mommaers, 'De mysticus Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Collationes* 11 (1981), pp. 285–304.

——— (1981b) = Paul Mommaers, 'Jan van Ruusbroec. Mystik ist Ganzheit und Begegnung,' in: *Geist und Leben* 54 (1981), pp. 441–452.

——— (1981c) = Paul Mommaers, 'De mysticus en de taal,' in: *Handelingen van het XXXIIIe Vlaams Filologencongres, Antwerpen 14–16 april 1981*, pp. 243–251.

——— (1981d) = Paul Mommaers, 'Inleiding,' in: Jan van Ruusbroec, *Boecsken der verclaringhe*, *Opera omnia* 1, pp. 70–80.

——— (1984a) = Paul Mommaers, 'Une phrase clef des "Noces Spirituelles,"' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 100–123.

——— (1984b) = Paul Mommaers, 'Der Mystiker und das Wort. Ein Blick auf Hadewijch und Ruusbroec,' in: *Geist und Leben* 57 (1984), pp. 4–12.

——— (1995a) = Paul Mommaers, 'Internationale uitstraling van de Nederlandse mystieke literatuur,' in: Th.A.J.M. Janssen (ed.), *Nederlands in culturele context. Handelingen Twaalfde Colloquium Neerlandicum, Universitaire Faculteiten Sint-Ignatius Antwerpen, 28 augustus–3 september 1994*, Woubrugge, 1995, pp. 133–151.

——— (1995b) = Paul Mommaers, 'De "natuurlijke" weg naar binnen,' in: Thom Mertens (ed.), *'Siet, de brudegom comt.' Facetten van Die geestelike brulocht van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)*, Kampen 1995, pp. 37–48; 85–89.

——— (1995c) = Paul Mommaers, ' "Opgaen" en "nedergaen" in het werk van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 69 (1995), pp. 97–113; 193–215.

——— (1996) = Paul Mommaers, ' "Opgaen" en "nedergaen" in het werk van Jan van Ruusbroec (aflevering III),' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 70 (1996), pp. 216–239.

——— (1997) = Paul Mommaers, ' "Opgaen" en "nedergaen" in het werk van Jan van Ruusbroec (aflevering IV),' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 71 (1997), pp. 3–40.

——— (2009a) = Paul Mommaers, *Jan van Ruusbroec: de mystieke vereniging met God*, Leuven 2009.

——— (2009b) = Paul Mommaers, *Mystical union with God*, Leuven 2009. [= English translation of Mommaers (2009a)]

Mommaers & De Paepe (1984) = P. Mommaers & N. de Paepe, *Jan van Ruusbroec. The sources, content and sequels of his mysticism* (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series I/ Studia XII), Leuven 1984.

Mommaers & Van Bragt (1995) = Paul Mommaers & Jan van Bragt, *Ruusbroec in gesprek met het Oosten. Mystiek in boeddhisme en christendom*, Averbode-Kampen 1995.

Mommaers & Willaert (1988) = Paul Mommaers & Frank Willaert, 'Mystisches Erlebnis und sprachliche Vermittlung in den Briefen Hadewijchs,' in: Dinzelbacher & Bauer (1988), pp. 117–151.

Moreau (1977) = Brigitte Moreau, *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes du 16e siècle, d'après les manuscrits de Philippe Renouard*, Paris 1977.

Murdoch (1970) = Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignity of Good*, London 1970.

Murk-Jansen (1991) = Sakia Murk-Jansen *The Measure of Mystic Thought: A Study of Hadewijch's Mengeldichten* (Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 536), Göppingen 1991.

Nachtergaele (1981) = V. Nachtergaele, 'Ruusbroec en de Franse literatuur,' in: *Onze Alma Mater* 35 (1981), pp. 294–302.

(Van) Nieuwenhove (1998) = Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'Meister Eckhart and Jan van Ruusbroec. A comparison,' in: *Medieval philosophy and theology* 7 (1998), pp. 157–193.

——— (2000a) = Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'Neoplatonism, "Regiratio" and Trinitarian theology: A Look at Ruusbroec,' in *Hermathena* (2000), afl. 169, pp. 169–188.

——— (2000b) = Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'Ruusbroec: Apophatic Theologian or Phenomenologist of the Mystical Experience?,' in: *Journal of Religion* 80 (2000), pp. 83–105.

——— (2001a) = Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'In the Image of God: The Trinitarian Anthropology of St Bonaventure, St Thomas Aquinas and the Blessed Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Irish Theological Quarterly* 66 (2001), pp. 109–123; 227–237.

——— (2001b) = Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'The Franciscan inspiration of Ruusbroec's mystical theology. Ruusbroec in dialogue with Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 75 (2001), pp. 102–115.

——— (2003) = Rik van Nieuwenhove, *Jan van Ruusbroec, Mystical Theologian of the Trinity*, Notre Dame (IN) 2003.

——— (2005) = Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'Experience and Mystical Theology in the Fourteenth Century: An Examination of Ruusbroec,' in: Lieven Boeve, e.a. (eds), *Encountering Transcendence: Contributions to a Theology of Christian Religious Experience*, Leuven 2005, pp. 411–424.

——— (2008) = Rik van Nieuwenhove, 'Jan van Ruusbroec on the Trinity, Prayer, and the Nature of Contemplation,' in: Roy Hammerling (ed.), *A History of Prayer: The First to the Fifteenth Century*, Leiden 2008, pp. 369–388.

(Van) Nieuwenhove, Faesen & Rolfson (2008) = Rik Van Nieuwenhove, Rob Faesen and Helen Rolfson (eds), *Late Medieval Mysticism of the Low Countries* (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 2008.

Nissen & Pansters (forthcoming) = Peter Nissen & Krijn Pansters, *Carthusian Worlds. Exploring the Carthusians and Their Heritage*, Leuven, forthcoming.

Noë (1981) = Hilde Noë, *Licht. Een literair onderzoek naar het gebruik van het beeld van het licht in Jan van Ruusbroecs 'Die geestelike brulocht',* Nijmegen 1981 (unpublished).

——— (1984) = Hilde Noë, 'Jan van Ruusbroec als prozaschrijver. Staat van het onderzoek,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 58 (1984), pp. 210–226.

——— (1985a) = Hilde Noë, 'Veertig- en vijftigjarigen als tekstkritisch probleem in Ruusbroecs Becoringhen,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 59 (1985), pp. 3–16.

——— (1985b) = Hilde Noë, 'Een droom wordt langzaam waar! De nieuwe kritische uitgave van Ruusbroecs "Steen" en "Becoringhen," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 59 (1985), pp. 560–573.

——— (1989) = Hilde Noë, 'Jan van Ruusbroecs *Dat rijcke der ghelieven*. Op verkenning in een beeldenrijk,' in: G.R.W. Dibbets & P.W.M. Wackers (eds), *Wat duikers vent is dit! Opstellen voor W.M.H. Hummelen*, Wijhe 1989, pp. 41–53.

——— (2000) = Hilde Noë, ' "Niet vergaen, maer vernuwen": De openbaring van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Queeste* 7 (2000), pp. 115–127.

——— (2001) = Hilde Noë, *In een verwonderen van al deser rijcheyt. Het beeldgebruik in Jan van Ruusbroecs* Dat rijcke der ghelieven, Leuven 2001. [Dissertation]

——— (2001b) = Hilde Noë, 'Jan van Ruusbroec. Beelden van toen en nu,' in: Versluys (2001), pp. 162–176.

——— (2002) = Hilde Noë, 'Sacra memoria. Beeldspraak en memorie in Jan van Ruusbroecs Dat rijcke der ghelieven,' in: *Vooys. Tijschrift voor letteren* 20 (2002), afl. 1, pp. 24–31.

——— (2005) = Hilde Noë, ' "Vlieten inde welde zeebaren." De waterbeeldspraak in Jan van Ruusbroecs "Die geestelike brulocht," ' in: Baert & Fraeters (2005), pp. 85–121.

——— (2010) = Hilde Noë, 'Het mysterie van de ring in *Vanden blinkenden steen*,' in: Kees Schepers & Frans Hendrickx (eds), *De letter levend maken. Opstellen aangeboden aan Guido de Baere bij zijn zeventigste verjaardag*, Leuven 2010, pp. 479–496.

Norbert Ubarri (2007) = Miguel Norbert Ubarri, *Jan van Ruusbroec y Juan de la Cruz: la mística en diálogo*, Madrid 2007.

——— (2010) = Miguel Norbert Ubarri, 'De nieuwe drietalige *Opera Omnia* van Ruusbroec. Een belangrijke bijdrage tot het wetenschappelijke onderzoek van de Spaanse mystiek in de Gouden Eeuw,' in: Schepers & Hendrickx (2010), pp. 497–511.

O'Sheridan (1914) = P. O'Sheridan, 'Une tentative malheureuse de Ruysbroeck: la fondation du second ordre prédit par Joachim de Flore,' in: *Revue Belge d'Histoire* 1 (1914), pp. 98–147.

——— (1925) = P. O'Sheridan, 'Ce qui reste de la plus ancienne vie de Ruusbroec,' in: *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 21 (1925), pp. 51–78; 215–248.

——— (1928) = P. O'Sheridan, 'La doctrine vauvertine sur le communisme ecclésiastique,' in: *Revue des sciences religieuses* 8 (1928), pp. 196–229; 552–567.

——— (1928/1929) = P. O'Sheridan, 'Un ouvrage latin de Ruysbroeck,' in: *Studia Catholica* 5 (1928–1929), pp. 1–22.

——— (1929) = P. O'Sheridan, 'La doctrine vauvertine sur le communisme ecclésiastique,' in: *Revue des sciences religieuses* 9 (1929), pp. 43–60.

Öhmann (1969) = Emil Öhmann, 'Gheraert Appelmans und Meister Eckhart,' in: *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 70 (1969), pp. 351–353.

Oosterman & Willaert (2003) = Johan Oosterman & Frank Willaert, 'Geen liefde op het eerste gezicht. In gesprek met Geert Warnar, biograaf van Ruusbroec,' in: *Literatuur* 20 (2003), pp. 8–10.

(van) Oostrom (1989) = F.P. van Oostrom, 'Voortgang of vooruitgang in de studie van de Middelnederlandse letterkunde,' in: van Oostrom (1989), pp. 243–263.

——— (1995b) = Frits van Oostrom, 'De toga van Jonckbloet,' in: van Oostrom e.a. (1995a), pp. 9–26.

——— (2006) = Frits van Oostrom, *Stemmen op schrift. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur vanaf het begin tot 1300*, Amsterdam 2006.

(van) Oostrom & Willaert (1989) = F.P. van Oostrom and Frank Willaert (eds), *De studie van de Middelnederlandse letterkunde: stand en toekomst. Symposium Antwerpen 22–24 september 1988* (Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen, 14), Hilversum 1989.

(van) Oostrom e.a. (1991) = F.P. van Oostrom e.a. (eds), *Misselike tonghe. De Middelnederlandse letterkunde in interdisciplinair verband* (Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen, 5), Amsterdam 1991.

(van) Oostrom e.a. (1995a) = F.P. van Oostrom e.a. (eds), *Grote lijnen. Syntheses over Middelnederlandse letterkunde* (Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen, 9), Amsterdam 1995.

Opgenhaffen (2013) = Tim Opgenhaffen, 'Saint Aldegund. First Mystic of the Low Countries. The Bride and the Bridegroom in the Merovingian Era,' in: *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* (2013) 3/4, pp. 659–692.

Orcibal (1966) = J. Orcibal, 'Saint Jean de la Croix et Ruysbroeck,' in: *Saint Jean de la Croix et les mystiques rhéno-flamands* (Présence du Carmel, no 6), Paris/Tournai 1966, pp. 66–79.

Otterloo (1896) = A.A. van Otterloo, *Johannes Ruysbroeck. Een bijdrage tot de kennis van den ontwikkelingsgang der mystiek*. Opnieuw uitgegeven door J.C. van Slee, 's-Gravenhage 1896.

Owen (1964) = H.W. Owen, 'Another Augustine Baker manuscript,' *Dr. L. Reypens-Album* (Studiën en Tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 16), Antwerp 1964, pp. 269–280.

Pak (2008) = Pyong-Gwan Pak, *The Vernacular, Mystical Theology of Jan van Ruusbroec: Exploring Sources, Contexts and Theological Practices*, Boston (Mass.) 2008. [Dissertation]

Paulissen (1959) = J.H.J. Paulissen, *Het leven en de werken van Fulgentius Bottens*, Utrecht & Nijmegen 1959.

Peerle (1535) = *Margarita Evangelica. Een devoet boecxken geheeten Die Evangelische Peerle*, Utrecht 1535.

Peeters (1981) = L. Peeters, 'De grote thema's in de mystiek van Ruusbroec,' in: *Vlaanderen* 30 (1981), pp. 153–156.

Persoons (1961) = Ernest Persoons, 'De handschriften van Pomerius' De origine monasterii viridisvallis,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 35 (1961), pp. 409–421.

——— (1970) = Ernest Persoons, 'Prieurée de Groenendaal, à Hoeilaart,' in: *Monasticon Belge* (1970), pp. 1067–1087.

——— (1981) = Ernest Persoons, 'Ruusbroec en de moderne devotie,' in: *Vlaanderen* 30 (1981), pp. 157–160.

Petrocchi (1978) = M. Petrocchi, *Storia della spiritualità italiana*, vol. 2: *Il Cinquecento e il Seicento* (Letture di pensiero e d'arte, 51), Rome 1978.

Planctus (1885) = 'Planctus super obitu fratris Iohannis de Speculo,' in: *Analecta Bollandiana*, 4 (1885), pp. 323–333.

Podevijn (1941) = R. Podevijn, 'De oorspronkelijke "Vita Bavonis," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 15 (1941), pp. 62–72.

Pomerius, *De origine* (1885) = Henricus Pomerius, 'De origine monasterii Viridis Vallis una cum vitis B. Joannis Rusbrochii [. . .] et aliquot coaetaneorum ejus,' in: *Analecta Bollandiana* 4 (1885), pp. 257–334.

(Van) Poppel (1912) = G. van Poppel, 'Een en ander over Ruusbroec,' in: *De Katholiek. Godsdienstig Geschied- en Letterkundig Maandschrift* 142 (1912), pp. 363–366; 424–432.

——— (1913a) = G. van Poppel, 'Een en ander over Ruusbroec,' in: *De Katholiek. Godsdienstig Geschied- en Letterkundig Maandschrift* 143 (1913), pp. 159–164; 447–461.

——— (1913b) = G. van Poppel, 'Een en ander over Ruusbroec,' in: *De Katholiek. Godsdienstig Geschied- en Letterkundig Maandschrift* 144 (1913), pp. 449–455.

Porete, *Mirouer* (1986) = *Le mirouer des simples ames. Speculum simplicium animarum*, ed. Romana Guarnieri & Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 69), Turnhout 1986.

Porion (1954a) = Hadewijch d'Anvers, *Écrits mystiques des béguines*, traduits du Moyen-Néerlandais par Fr. J.-B. P[orion], Paris 1954.

——— (1954b) = Hadewijch d'Anvers, *Poèmes des béguines*, traduits de moyen-néerlandais par J.-B. P[orion] (La Vigne du Carmel), Paris 1954.

Porteman (1973) = Karel Porteman, 'Dwers door eenen duysteren nacht. Zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse vertalingen van gedichten van Juan de la Cruz,' in: *Verslagen en Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde 1973*, pp. 103–186.

——— (1978) = Karel Porteman, *De mystieke lyriek van Lucas van Mechelen (1595/1596–1662)* (Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde, VI[e] Reeks: Bekroonde werken, 108), Gent 1978.

Post (1950) = R. Post, 'Heeft Geert Grote een of twee boeken van Ruusbroec vertaald?,' in: *Studia Catholica* 25 (1950), pp. 102–104.

Poukens & Reypens (1931) = J.B. Poukens & L. Reypens, 'De eeuw van Ruusbroec 1293–1381,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven-Werken*, Mechelen/Amsterdam 1931, pp. 18–41.

Rayez (1963) = A. Rayez, 'Française (École), ' in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* V (1963), cols 782–784.

Renouard (1843) = A.A. Renouard, *Annales de l'imprimerie des Estienne ou histoire de la famille des Estienne et de ses éditions*, Paris 1843[2] [reprint New York, s.a.].

Reynaert (1981a) = Joris Reynaert, 'Ruusbroec en Hadewijch,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 55 (1981), pp. 193–232.

——— (1981b) = Joris Reynaert, *De beeldspraak van Hadewijch* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 21), Tielt 1981.

Reypens (1914) = Leonce Reypens, 'Voor de geschiedenis van Jan van Ruysbroeck. Naar aanleiding van eene nieuwe kritiek der bronnen,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 15 (1914), pp. 405–416; 505–522.

——— (1921) = Leonce Reypens, 'Uit den voorarbeid tot eene critische uitgave van Ruusbroec's "Brulocht," ' in: *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie* 1921, pp. 77–89.

——— (1922) = Leonce Reypens, 'Le sommet de la contemplation mystique. Chez le bienheureux Jean de Ruusbroec,' in: *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 3 (1922), pp. 250–272.

——— (1923) = Leonce Reypens, 'Ruusbroecbijdragen. Belangrijke ontdekking in handschrift A,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal- en Letterkunde* 42 (1923), pp. 47–71.

——— (1924a) = Leonce Reypens, 'Het oude Ruusbroec-portret teruggevonden en een Ruusbroec-gravure naar Van Diepenbeek ontdekt,' in: *Leuvensche Bijdragen* 16 (1924), pp. 139–149.

——— (1924b) = Leonce Reypens, 'Het weergevonden Ruusbroec-portret en de Ruusbroec-verering,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 24 (1924), pp. 973–979.

——— (1926) = Leonce Reypens, 'Voor de geschiedenis van Jan van Ruysbroeck. II. Ruusbroec Joachimiet?,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 26 (1926), pp. 92–107.

——— (1927a) = Leonce Reypens, 'Gheraert Appelmans' Glose op het Vaderons,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 1 (1927), pp. 81–107.

——— (1927b) = Leonce Reypens, 'Een nieuw merkwaardig Dietsch mystiek. Broeder Gheraert Appelmans,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 1 (1927), pp. 113–141.

——— (1931a) = Leonce Reypens, 'Ruusbroec's mystieke leer,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven-Werken*, Mechelen/Amsterdam 1931, pp. 151–177.

——— (1931b) = Leonce Reypens, 'Iconographie van Ruusbroec,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven-Werken*, Mechelen/Amsterdam 1931, pp. 309–324.

——— (1931c) = Leonce Reypens, 'Ruusbroec en Juan de la Cruz. Hun overeenstemming omtrent het toppunt der beschouwing,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 5 (1931), pp. 143–185.

——— (1931d) = Leonce Reypens, 'Het toppunt der beschouwing vóór Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 5 (1931), pp. 429–434.

——— (1932a) = Leonce Reypens, 'Ruusbroec's leer,' in: D.A. Stracke, J. van Mierlo & L. Reypens (eds), *Ruusbroec de Wonderbare. Zijn leven, zijn kunst, zijn leer*, Leuven 1932, pp. 113–144.

——— (1932b) = Leonce Reypens, 'Een eere-paneel met Groenendael's beroemdheden,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 6 (1932), pp. 40–59.

——— (1932c) = Leonce Reypens, 'Ruusbroec's mystiek als bekroning der inkeeringstheorie,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 6 (1932), pp. 257–281.

——— (1932d) = Leonce Reypens, 'Dokumenten voor de geschiedenis van Groenendaal,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 6 (1932), pp. 221–230.

——— (1938a) = Leonce Reypens, 'Ruusbroec-studiën, I. Het mystieke "gherinen" '; II. 'Natuurlijke en bovennatuurlijke schouwing,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 12 (1938), pp. 158–186; 392–411.

——— (1938b) = Leonce Reypens, 'La "nuit de l'esprit" chez Ruusbroec,' in: *Études Carmélitaines* 23 (1938), pp. 75–81.

——— (1943a) = Leonce Reypens, 'Een Vaderons-glose van Ruusbroec?,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 17 (1943), pp. 9–25.

——— (1943b) = Leonce Reypens, 'De uitgave van 't Groenendaelsche obituarium en haar eerste vruchten,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 17 (1943), pp. 114–131.

——— (1943c) = Leonce Reypens, 'Ruusbroec in een handschrift der Roermondsche kartuis,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 17 (1943), pp. 162–173.

——— (1950a) = Leonce Reypens, 'Bij het zesde eeuwfeest der Hoogduitse vertaling van Ruusbroec's "Brulocht," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 24 (1950), pp. 225–242.

——— (1950b) = Leonce Reypens, 'Vertaalde Geert Grote Ruusbroec's "VII Trappen"?,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 24 (1950), pp. 401–408.

——— (1964) = Léonce Reypens, 'Der "Goldene Pfennig" bei Tauler und Ruusbroec,' in: Ruh (1964), pp. 353–362.

——— (1969) = Leonce Reypens, 'Jan Spieghel de schilder van het oudste Ruusbroecportret?,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 43 (1969), pp. 195–197.

——— (1970) = Leonce Reypens, 'Bij de tekstoverlevering van Ruusbroecs "Brulocht." Enige feiten,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 44 (1970), pp. 328–340.

Reypens & Van Mierlo (1925) = L. Reypens & J. Van Mierlo, 'Een nieuwe schrijfster uit de eerste helft der XIIIe eeuw, de gelukzalige Beatrijs van Nazareth (1200?-1268),' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 25 (1925), pp. 352–367.

Ricard (1963) = R. Ricard, 'L'influence des «mystiques du Nord» sur les spirituels portugais du XVIe et du XVIIe siècle,' in: *La mystique rhénane*, Paris 1963, pp. 219–233.

Rice (1972) = E.F. Rice, *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples and Related Texts*, New York/London 1972.

(De) Ridder (1981) = P. de Ridder, 'Ruusbroec, Brussel en Brabant,' in: *Vlaanderen* 30 (1981), afl. 182–183, pp. 167–170.

——— (1993) = P. de Ridder, 'De herdenking van de driehonderdste verjaardag van het overlijden van Jan van Ruusbroec te Groenendaal (1681),' in: *Ruusbroec. De luister van Groenendaal*, Brussels 1993, pp. 77–81.

Rocquet (2000) = Claude-Henri Rocquet, *Ruusbroec: een inleiding tot zijn persoon en tijd*, Zoetermeer 2000.

——— (2004) = Claude-Henri Rocquet, 'Ruysbroeck: mystique nuptiale, mystique maternelle,' in: Alain Dierkens & Benoît Beyer de Ryke, *Maître Eckhart et Jan van Ruusbroec. Études sur la mystique 'rhéno-flamande' (XIIIe–XIVe siècle)*, Bruxelles 2004, pp. 211–226.

Roemans (1932) = Robrecht Roemans, 'Beschrijvende bibliographie van en over Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven—werken*. Onder de redactie van het Ruusbroec-genootschap, Antwerp 1932, pp. 325–395.

Rolfson (1984) = Helen Rolfson, 'Ruusbroec in American English,' in: Paul Mommaers & N. De Paepe (eds), *Jan van Ruusbroec. The Sources, Content and Sequels of his Mysticism* (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series I/Studia XII), Leuven 1984, pp. 187–195.

——— (2008) = Helen Rolfson, "Gerard Appelmans: Gloss on the Our Father," in: *Late Medieval Mysticism in the Low Countries*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove, Rob Faesen & Helen Rolfson (eds), (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 2008.

——— (2010) = Helen Rolfson, 'Ruusbroec on Hell,' in: Schepers & Hendrickx (2010), pp. 513–523.

Rombouts, de Paepe & de Haan (1976) = E. Rombouts, N. de Paepe & M.J.M. de Haan (eds), *Ferguut*, Culemborg 1976.

(De) Ronde (1925) = Theo de Ronde, 'Het literair wedervaren van Ruysbroeck in Frankrijk,' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 25 (1925), pp. 424–433.

Ruelens (1905) = K. Ruelens, 'Jan van Ruysbroek en Blomardinne,' in: J. Vercouille (ed.), *Werken van zuster Hadewijch*, vol. 3, Gent 1905, pp. XX–XCVI.

Ruh (1964) = Kurt Ruh (ed.), *Altdeutsche und Altniederländische Mystik*, Darmstadt 1964.

——— (1993) = Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländische Mystik. Zweiter Band. Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik der Frühzeit*, München 1993.

——— (1996) = Kurt Ruh, 'Jan van Ruusbroec: Versuch einer Würdigung von Person und Werk,' in: *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 125 (1996), pp. 1–50.

——— (1999a) = Kurt Ruh, 'Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik. Vierter Band. Die niederländische Mystik des 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert*, München 1999, pp. 26–82.

——— (1999b) = Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländische Mystik*, vol. 4, *Die niederländische Mystik des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1999.

Ruusbroec-gedenkboek (1931) = Ruusbroec-gedenkboek, *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven. Werken*, Mechelen-Amsterdam, 1931.

Rydstrøm-Poulsen (2008) = Aage Rydstrøm-Poulsen, 'Research on William of Saint-Thierry from 1998 to 2008,' in: *Analecta Cisterciensia* 58 (2008), pp. 159–169.

——— (2010) = Aage Rydstrøm-Poulsen, 'The Human Person in the Trinity: William of Saint-Thierry's Mysticism,' in: *The American Benedictine Review* 61 (2010), pp. 360–372.

Sanchis Alventosa (1946) = Joaquin Sanchis Alventosa, *La escuela alemana y sus relaciones con nuestros místicos del siglo de oro*, Madrid 1946.

Sanderus (1641) = A. Sanderus, *Bibliotheca Belgica Manuscripta sive Elenchus universalis codicum Mss. in celebrioribus Belgii Coenobiis, Ecclesiis, Urbium ac Privatorum Hominum Bibliothecis ad latentium*, vol. 1, Lille 1641.

Sargent (1976) = M.G. Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Cartusians of some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings,' in: *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976), pp. 225–240.

——— (1983) = M.G. Sargent, 'Ruusbroec in England: The Chastising of God's Children and Related Works,' in: *Historia et Spiritualitas Cartusiensis* (Colloquii Quarti Internationalis, Acta), Destelbergen 1983, pp. 303–312.

——— (1985) = M.G. Sargent, 'The Heneage Manuscript of "Calculus de Perfectione Filiorum Dei" and the Middle English, "Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God," ' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 59 (1985), pp. 533–559.

——— (1997) = Michael Sargent, 'The Annihilation of Marguerite Porete,' in: *Viator* 28 (1997), pp. 253–279.

——— (2010) = Michael Sargent, 'Marguerite Porete,' in: Minnis & Voaden (2010), pp. 291–309.

Sassen (1940) = Ferd. Sassen, 'Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381) als wijsgeer,' in: *Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte en Psychologie* 34 (1940), pp. 1–7.

——— (1948) = F. Sassen, 'De Middelnederlandse mystiek,' in: *De wijsbegeerte der Middeleeuwen in de Nederlanden*, Lochem 1948 (2e herziene druk), pp. 131–141.

Scheepsma (2005) = Wybren Scheepsma, *De Limburgse sermoenen* (*ca. 1300*). *De oudste preken in het Nederlands*, Amsterdam 2005.

——— (2008) = Wybren Scheepsma, *The* Limburg Sermons: *Preaching in the Medieval Low Countries at the turn of the Fourteenth Century* (Brill's series in Church History, 34), Leiden 2008.

Schepers (1999) = Kees Schepers, 'Het *Compendium theologicae veritatis* van Hugo Ripelin van Straatsburg als bron voor Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 73 (1999), pp. 111–149.

——— (2001) = Kees Schepers, 'An Unknown Ruusbroec Letter in Willem Jordaens's Latin, Found in an East-Prussian Manuscript in Cambridge,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 75 (2001), pp. 32–68.

——— (2001) = Kees Schepers, 'Determining the origin of the Walter Hilton, John of Ruusbroec MS Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, 5 F 34,' in: *Quaerendo* 31 (2001), pp. 247–254.

——— (2008) = Kees Schepers, 'Het verborgen leven van de zusters Agnieten. Mystieke cultuur in Arnhem,' in: *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 79 (2008), pp. 285–316.

——— (2010a) = Kees Schepers, 'Literary Style as Cultural Code. A Case Study of the Early Ruusbroec Translations by Willem Jordaens and Geert Grote,' in: Schepers & Hendrickx (2010), pp. 525–558.

——— (2010b) = Kees Schepers, 'Predigten für den Tempel der Seele. Metaphorik in den *Arnheimer mystischen Predigten*,' in: Wetzel & Flückiger (2010), pp. 375–395.

Schepers & Hendrickx (2010) = Kees Schepers & Frans Hendrickx (eds), *De letter levend maken. Liber amicorum Guido de Baere* (Miscellanea Neerlandica, 39), Leuven 2010.

Schilling (1930) = Wilhelmina Christina Antonia Schilling, *Een proeve van stilistiek bij Ruusbroec, 'den Wonderbare,'* Amsterdam 1930. [Dissertation]

Schirpenbach (1996) = Meik Peter Schirpenbach, *Leben aus dem Geheimnis Gottes. Die mystische Trinitätslehre des Johannes Ruusbroec*, Bonn 1996.

Schlusemann & Wackers (1997) = R. Schlusemann & P. Wackers (eds), *Die spätmittelalterliche Rezeption Niederländischer Literatur im Deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Amsterdammer Beiträge zur Alteren Germanistik, 47), Amsterdam 1997.

Schmitt-Fiack (1972) = Renate Schmitt-Fiack, *Wise und wisheit bei Eckhart, Tauler, Seuse und Ruusbroec* (Deutsche Studien, 16), Meisenheim am Glan 1972.

Schmitz (1948) = Ph. Schmitz, *Histoire de l'Ordre de Saint-Benoît*, vol. 3, Maredsous 1948.

(Van) Schoote (1961) = J.-P. Van Schoote, 'Laurentius Surius (ord. Cart.) a-t-il traduit en Latin la "Perle evangelique"?,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 35 (1961), pp. 29–58.

Schultz-Zellmann (1983) = U. Schultz-Zellmann, 'Zur Spiegelmetapher im Werk des Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 57 (1983), pp. 248–269.

Schweitzer (1982) = F.-J. Schweitzer, 'Die "zweite" Ketzer"sorte" in Ruusbroecs "Geistlicher Hochzeit." Der Mensch als Gottes "Werkzeug" und sein Verdienen,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 56 (1982), pp. 128–143.

——— (1984) = F.-J. Schweitzer, '*Caritatem habe, et fac quod vis!*—Die "Freien Geister" in der Darstellung Jans van Ruusbroec und in Selbstzeugnissen,' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 48–67.

Seynnaeve (1995) = Johan Seynnaeve, 'Linguistic Comments in Gheraert's Prologue to Ruusbroec's Works,' in: James Hogg (ed.), *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians* (Analecta cartusiana 130), Salzburg 1995.

(da) Silva Dias (1960) = J.S. da Silva Dias, *Correntes de sentimento religioso em Portugal* (*séculos XVI a XVIII*), Coimbra 1960.

Simons (2001) = Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies. Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565*, Philadelphia 2001.

Smits van Waesberghe (1945) = M.M.J. Smits van Waesberghe, *Het verschijnsel van de opheffing des geestes bij Jan van Ruusbroec en Hendrik Herp*, Nijmegen 1945.

(De) Soer (1959) = G.B. de Soer, 'The Relationship of the Latin Versions of Ruysbroeck's "Die Geestelike Brulocht" to "The Chastising of God's Children,"' in: *Mediaeval Studies* 21 (1959), pp. 129–146.

Spearritt (1974) = P. Spearritt, 'The survival of mediaeval spirituality among the exiled English black monks,' in: *The American Benedictine Review* 25 (1974), pp. 287–309 (with appendix, pp. 310–316).

Steen (1921) = D. Ph. Muller, ed., *Jan van Ruysbroeck, Van den blinckenden steen met W. Jordaens' Latijnsche vertaling* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven 4), Leuven 1921.

Stracke (1914) = Desiderius Stracke, 'Verslag van een onderzoek naar Nederlandsche handschriften en wiegedrukken in Oostenrijk-Hongarije,' in: *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie*, 1914, pp. 750–788.

——— (1928) = Desiderius Stracke, 'Een fragment van Ruusbroec's Tabernakel,' in: *Tijdschrift voor taal en letteren* 16 (1928), pp. 141–147.

——— (1931) = Desiderius Stracke, 'Jan van Ruusbroec's leven en karakter,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven-Werken*, Mechelen-Amsterdam 1931, pp. 60–100.

——— (1932) = Desiderius Stracke, 'Leven en werken van den Gelukzalige,' in: D.A. Stracke, J. van Mierlo & Leonce Reypens, *Ruusbroec de Wonderbare. Zijn leven, zijn kunst, zijn leer*, Leuven 1932, pp. 19–71.

——— (1936) = Desiderius Stracke, *Middeleeuwsche Glose op het Pater en Ave, XIVe eeuw*, Antwerp 1936.

Swart (1995) = Loet Swart, 'Het vergezicht van de auteur en het ongeduld van de tekst. Over Jan van Ruusbroec en zijn hoofdwerk *Die gheestelike brulocht*,' in: P. Bange (ed.), *Geloof, moraal en intellect in de middeleeuwen* (Middeleeuwse Studies, Band X), Nijmegen 1995, pp. 38–46.

——— (2006) = Loet Swart, *De articulatie van de mystieke omvorming in 'Die geestelike Brulocht' van Jan van Ruusbroec*, Nijmegen 2006. [Dissertation]

——— (2010) = Loet Swart, '"Scouwen," "ghebruken" en "smaken" in de *Brulocht*,' in: Kees Schepers & Frans Hendrickx (eds), *De letter levend maken. Opstellen aangeboden aan Guido de Baere bij zijn zeventigste verjaardag*, Leuven 2010, pp. 579–596.

Teasdale (1984) = Wayne Teasdale, 'Ruysbroeck's Mystical Theology,' in: *American Benedictine Review* 35 (1984), pp. 82–96; 176–193.

Tentoonstellingscatalogus (1981) = *Jan van Ruusbroec 1293–1381: Tentoonstellingscatalogus met als bijlage een chronologische tabel en drie kaarten*, Brussels 1981.

Thomas a Kempis *Chronica* (1922) = Thomas a Kempis, *Chronica montis sanctae Agnetis*, in: *Thomae Hemerken a Kempis Opera Omnia*, ed. M. J. Pohl, vol. 7, Freiburg im Breisgau 1922, pp. 331–478.

Trappen (1911) = D. Ph. Müller, ed., *Jan van Ruysbroeck, Van den .vij. trappen met Geert Groote's Latijnsche vertaling* (Studiën en tekstuitgaven, 1) Brussels/Leuven 1911.

Umans (1992) = J.M. Umans, 'Waarom ik Ruusbroec in het Japans vertaal,' in: *Kerk en missie* 72 (1992), vol. 265, pp. 8–13.

Underhill (1914) = Evelyn Underhill, *Ruysbroeck*, London 1914.

Uyttenhove (2005) = Lieve Uyttenhove, 'John of Ruusbroec—A Mystical Experience: Toward an Encounter with God,' in: Lieven Boeve; e.a. (eds), *Encountering Transcendence: Contributions to a Theology of Christian Religious Experience*, Leuven 2005, pp. 425–447.

——— (2007) = Lieve Uyttenhove, '"For God is a Flowing, Ebbing Sea"—The Trinity in the Work of Jan van Ruusbroec: a Key to the Mystical Life,' in: *Bijdragen. International Journal in Philosophy and Theology* 68 (2007), pp. 399–422.

——— (2008) = Lieve Uyttenhove, *Triniteit bij Jan van Ruusbroec: tekstanalyse, vergelijkend cultuurhistorisch onderzoek en gesprek met Catherine M. LaCugna*, Leuven 2008. [Dissertation]

——— (2009) = Lieve Uyttenhove, '"Pues dios es un mar que fluye, y re-fluye." La Trinidad en la obra de Jan van Ruusbroec: una clave para la vida mística,' in: *Mayéutica* 35 (2009), pp. 115–141.

——— (2011) = Lieve Uyttenhove, *Embraced by the Father and the Son in the Unity of the Holy Spirit. A Study of the Trinity and the Mystical Life in the Works of Jan van Ruusbroec*. Preface Rob Faesen. Trans. Brian Doyle and David Kirchhoffer (Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia, LXV), Leuven 2011.

Vallarsa (2010) = Alessia Vallarsa, '*Nell'alta conoscenza del nudo amore*': *Un testo anonimo della mistica brabantina del 14 secolo: Le Mengeldichten 17–29*, Padua/Ghent 2010. [Dissertation]

(van) Veghel (1948) = Optatus van Veghel, *De spiritualiteit van de capucijnen in de Nederlanden gedurende de XVIIe en XVIIIe eeuw* (Batavia Sacra, 5), Utrecht-Brussels 1948.

Vekeman (1981) = H. Vekeman. 'Ruusbroec tijdsgebonden en tijdloos. Astrologie en mystiek,' in: *Vlaanderen* 30 (1981), pp. 161–165.

——— (1984) = H.W.J. Vekeman, 'Vriendschap in de Middelnederlandse mystiek. De plaats van Ruusbroec,' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 124–141.

——— (1996) = Herman Vekeman, *Eerherstel voor een mystieke amazone*: *Het Tweevormich Tractaetken, Middelnederlandse tekst met hertaling en commentaar* (Mystieke teksten en thema's, 9), Kampen/Averbode 1996.

——— (2002) = Herman Vekeman, 'De geestesgaven bij Ruusbroec,' in: *Benedictijns tijdschrift* 63 (2002), pp. 128–144.

Verdeyen (1977) = Paul Verdeyen, 'De invloed van Willem van Saint-Thierry op Hadewijch en Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 51 (1977), pp. 3–19.

——— (1981a) = Paul Verdeyen, *Ruusbroec en zijn mystiek*, Leuven 1981.

——— (1981b) = [P.V.], 'Mystiek in de Nederlanden vóór Ruusbroec,' in: *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 1–14.

——— (1981c) = [P.V.], 'Traktaten,' in: *Tentoonstellingscatalogus* (1981), pp. 108–119.

——— (1981d) = Paul Verdeyen, 'Het levensverhaal van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381),' in: *Vlaanderen* 30 (1981), pp. 141–151.

——— (1981e) = Paul Verdeyen, 'De Middelnederlandse vertaling van Pomerius'werk "De origine monasterii Viridisvallis," in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 55 (1981), pp. 105–165.

——— (1981f) = Paul Verdeyen, 'Jan van Ruusbroec te Brussel,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 55 (1981), pp. 289–297.

——— (1982) = Paul Verdeyen, 'Over de auteur van Mengeldichten 17 tot 24,' in: J. Janssens (ed.), *Hoofsheid en devotie in de middeleeuwse maatschappij. Handelingen van het wetenschappelijk colloquium te Brussel 21–24 oktober 1981*, Brussels 1982, pp. 147–155.

——— (1984) = Paul Verdeyen, 'Essai de biographie critique,' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 1–13.

——— (1989) = Paul Verdeyen, 'Introduction générale,' in: William of Saint-Thierry, *Super Epistolam ad Romanos* (1989), pp. v–li.

——— (1990) = Paul Verdeyen, *La théologie mystique de Guillaume de Saint-Thierry*, Paris 1990 [First published in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 51 (1977), pp. 327–366; 52 (1978), pp. 152–178, 257–295; 53 (1979), pp. 129–220, 321–404].

——— (1992) = Paul Verdeyen, 'Oordeel van Ruusbroec over de rechtgelovigheid van Margaretha Porete,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 66 (1992), pp. 88–96.

——— (1993a) = Paul Verdeyen, 'De leer van Ruusbroec over de mens,' in: *Communio. Internationaal katholiek tijdschrift* 18 (1993), afl. 1, pp. 75–88.

——— (1993b) = Paul Verdeyen, 'L'anthropologie de Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 67 (1993), pp. 53–65.

——— (1995a) = Paul Verdeyen, 'Hoe zijn Bernardus en Willem aanwezig in de Brulocht?,' in: Thom Mertens (ed.), *'Siet, de brudegom comt.' Facetten van Die geestelike brulocht van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)*, Kampen 1995, pp. 9–20; 101–110.

——— (1995b) = Paul Verdeyen, 'Ruusbroec et les Chartreux,' in: James Hogg (ed.), *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians* (Analecta cartusiana, 130), Salzburg 1995, pp. 5–15.

——— (1996) = Paul Verdeyen, *Jan van Ruusbroec, mystiek licht uit de Middeleeuwen*, Leuven 1996.

——— (1998) = Paul Verdeyen, 'En quoi la connaissance de Guillaume de Saint-Thierry a-t-elle progressé depuis le colloque de 1976?' in: Nicole Boucher (ed.), *Signy l'Abbaye site cistercien enfoui, site de mémoire, et Guillaume de Saint-Thierry. Actes du Colloque international d'Études cisterciennes 9, 10, 11 septembre 1998, Les Vielles Forges (Ardennes)*, Signy L'Abbaye 1998, pp. 411–414.

Verjans (1931) = P.M. Verjans, 'De geschiedenis van het klooster van Groenendael,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven-Werken*, Mechelen/Amsterdam 1931, pp. 290–324.

Vermeylen (1941) = A. Vermeylen, *Proza*, Amsterdam 1941.

Verschueren (1929) = Lucidius Verschueren, 'De Latijnse edities der "Theologia Mystica,"' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 3 (1929), pp. 5–21.

——— (1931) = Lucidius Verschueren, 'De heraut van Ruusbroec,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec. Leven-Werken*, Mechelen/Amsterdam 1931, pp. 230–262.

Versluys (2001) = Luc Versluys (ed.), *Ruusbroec in meervoud. Inhoudende de handelingen van het colloquium 'Langs gerechte wegen. Jan van Ruusbroec vandaag*,' Hoeilaart 2001.

Vita Bavonis (1902) = 'Vita Bavonis confessoris Gandavensis,' in: *Monumenta Germaniae historica*: *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, vol. IV, ed. B. Krusch & W. Levison, Hannover 1902, pp. 534–545.

Vita Idae de Lovanio (1866) = *Vita beatae Idae de Lovanio* in: *Acta Sanctorum aprilis*, vol. 2, Paris/Rome 1866, cols 156–188.

Vita Idae de Nivellis (1630) = 'Vita beatae Idae de Nivellis Sanctimonialis in Monasterio de Rameya,' in: Henriquez (1630), pp. 199–297.

(De) Vreese (1895) = Willem de Vreese, 'Bijdragen tot de kennis van het leven en de werken van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Het Belfort* 10 (1895), tweede halfjaar, pp. 5–20; 102–113; 169–181; 253–262.

——— (1896) = Willem de Vreese, 'Bijdragen tot de kennis van het leven en de werken van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Het Belfort* 11 (1896), eerste halfjaar, pp. 57–67; 95–101.

——— (1900–1902) = Willem de Vreese, *De handschriften van Jan van Ruusbroec's Werken* (Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde, zesde reeks, 24), Gent 1900–1902, 2 vols.

Wackers (1989a) = P.W.M. Wackers, '"Geschiedverhaal of schetskaart" revisited. Overwegingen bij de studie van de Middelnederlandse letterkunde,' in: van Oostrom (1989), pp. 223–242.

——— (1989b) = P.W.M. Wackers, 'De kosmos bij Ruusbroec. Astrologie en allegorie,' in: G.R.W. Dibbets & P.W.M. Wackers (eds), *Wat duikers vent is dit! Opstellen voor W.M.H. Hummelen*, Wijhe 1989, pp. 55–73.

——— (1996) = P.W.M. Wackers, *Met ogen van toen. Schoonheid en wetenschap in de middeleeuwse kunst* (Kartons voor geschiedenis en letterkunde, 2), Amsterdam 1996.

(Van de) Walle (1938) = P.A. van de Walle, 'Is Ruusbroec Pantheïst?,' in *Ons geestelijk erf* 12 (1938), pp. 359–391.

——— (1939) = P.A. van de Walle, 'Is Ruusbroec pantheïst?,' in *Ons geestelijk erf* 13 (1939), pp. 66–105.

Warnar (1992) = Geert Warnar, 'De weduwe, de kok en de ridder. Middelnederlandse kloosterteksten voor de lekenvroomheid,' in: *Literatuur* 9 (1992), pp. 279–285.

——— (1993a) = Geert Warnar, 'Jan van Ruusbroec in Hollands en historisch perspectief,' in: *Madoc* 7 (1993), pp. 166–173.

——— (1993b) = Geert Warnar, 'Het leven van Jan van Ruusbroec. Biografie en beeldvorming,' in: E.P. Bos & G. Warnar, *Een claer verlicht man. Over het leven en werk van Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381)* (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 38), Hilversum 1993, pp. 13–30.

——— (1994) = Geert Warnar, 'De chronologie van Jan van Ruusbroecs werken,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 68 (1994), pp. 185–199.

——— (1995) = Geert Warnar, 'Meester Eckhart, Walter van Holland en Jan van Ruusbroec: historische en literaire betrekkingen in de Middelnederlandse mystiek,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 69 (1995), pp. 3–25.

——— (1997a) = Geert Warnar, 'Een sneeuwbui in het Zoniënwoud. Middelnederlandse geestelijke letterkunde ten tijde van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* 113 (1997), pp. 101–115.

——— (1997b) = Geert Warnar, 'Mysticus aan de lessenaar. Jan van Ruusbroec en de middeleeuwse literatuurtheorie, in: *Literatuur* 14 (1997), pp. 140–145.

——— (1999) = Geert Warnar, 'Jan van Ruusbroec and the Social Position of Late Medieval Mysticism,' in: W. Blockmans & A. Janse, *Showing Status: Representation of Social Positions in the Late Middle Ages*, Turnhout 1999, pp. 365–386.

——— (2000a) = Geert Warnar, 'Mystik in der Stadt. Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381) und die niederländische Literatur des 14. Jahrhunderts,' in: *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang. Neue erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte*. Kolloquium Kloster Fischingen 1998. Herausgegeben von Walter Haug und Wolfram Schneider-Lastin, Tübingen 2000, pp. 683–702.

——— (2000b) = Geert Warnar, 'Gemoraliseerde mystiek,' in: *Nieuw Letterkundig Magazijn* 18 (2000), pp. 34–37.

——— (2002) = Geert Warnar, 'Dubbelster of tegenpool? Boendale en Ruusbroec in de Middelnederlandse letterkunde van de veertiende eeuw,' in: Wim Van Anrooij e.a., *Al t'Antwerpen in die stad. Jan van Boendaele en de literaire cultuur van zijn tijd* (Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de Middeleeuwen, 24), Amsterdam 2002, pp. 31–44.

——— (2002b) = Geert Warnar, 'Ruh over Ruusbroec, of: een germanist op Ons Geestelijk Erf,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 118 (2002), pp. 357–361.

——— (2003a) = Geert Warnar, *Ruusbroec. Literatuur en mystiek in de veertiende eeuw*, Amsterdam 2003.

——— (2003b) = Geert Warnar, 'Ruusbroec in het middelpunt, maar waarvan? De mysticus en de Middelnederlandse letterkunde,' in: *Queeste* 10 (2003), afl. 1, pp. 15–26.

——— (2003c) = Geert Warnar, 'Tauler in Groenendaal: Mystik und Gelehrtheit in der niederländischen Literatur des 14. Jahrhunderts,' in: Angelika Lehmann-Benz, Ulrike Zellmann & Urban Küsters (eds) *Schnittpunkte: deutsch-niederländische Literaturbeziehungen im späten Mittelalter* (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur Nordwesteuropas, 5), Münster 2003, pp. 55–66.

——— (2004a) = Geert Warnar, '"Ex levitate mulierum": Masculine Mysticism and Jan van Ruusbroec's Perception of Religious Women,' in: Thérèse de Hemptinne & María Eugenia Góngora, *The Voice of Silence: Women's Literacy in a Men's Church*, Turnhout 2004, pp. 193–206.

——— (2004b) = Geert Warnar, 'Ruusbroec's Letters. Mystical Maturity and Age in Medieval Dutch Writing for Women,' in: Anneke Mulder-Bakker & Renée Nip, *The Prime of Their Lives. Wise Old Women in Pre-Industrial Europe*, Leuven 2004, pp. 87–101.

——— (2005) = Geert Warnar, 'Ruusbroec op bed. Over leefregels en leermeesters in Middelnederlandse teksten,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche taal- en letterkunde* 121 (2005), pp. 117–130.

——— (2006) = Geert Warnar, 'Ruusbroec in Groenendaal. Mystieke literatuur tussen kennis en kunst,' in: M. de Clercq & S. Van den Bossche (eds), *Zangers der groene waranden. Beelden van de literair-historische groene rand rond Brussel*, Leuven 2006, pp. 11–22.

——— (2007) = Geert Warnar, *Ruusbroec. Literature and mysticism in the fourteenth century*, Leiden 2007. [=Warnar (2003a)]

——— (2008) = Geert Warnar, 'Ruusbroec's Legacy. Mystical Writings and Charismatic Teaching in the Fourteenth Century,' in: *The Low Countries. Arts and Society in Flanders and the Netherlands: Vol. 16*, Brugge 2008, pp. 207–211.

——— (2009) = Geert Warnar, 'Ruusbroecs *Brulocht* tussen de preken van Tauler in handschrift en druk,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 80 (2009), pp. 48–63.

Wautiers d'Aygalliers (1923) = A. Wautiers d'Aygalliers, *Ruysbroeck l'Admirable*, Paris 1923.

Weil (1966) = Simone Weil, *Attente de Dieu*, Domont 1966.

Weiler (1984) = A.G. Weiler, 'Ervaring van onzekerheid in de late Middeleeuwen: twee wegen van Nederlandse spiritualiteit,' in: *Speling* 36 (1984), pp. 82–89.

Westerlinck (1981) = Albert Westerlinck, 'Ruusbroec en het geluk (†1381–1981),' in: *Dietsche Warande en Belfort* 126 (1981), pp. 481–494.

Wetzel & Flückiger (2010) = R. Wetzel & F. Flückiger (eds), *Die Predigt im Mittelalter zwischen Mündlichkeit, Bildlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit* (Medienwandel—Medienwechsel—Medienwissen, 13), Zürich 2010.

(De) Wilde (1981) = G. de Wilde, 'Ruusbroec in het kader van een woelige 14de eeuw,' in: *Jan van Ruusbroec 1293–1381. Tentoonstelling 16 november–24 december 1981*, Antwerp 1981, pp. 11–20.

Wilkeshuis (1930) = C. Wilkeshuis, 'Het ethische en christo-centrische van de mystiek van Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* 24 (1930), pp. 138–148.

Will (1926) = R. Will, 'Ruusbroec l'Admirable,' in: *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 6 (1926), pp. 60–72.

Willaert (1984) = Frank Willaert, *De poëtica van Hadewijch in de Strofische Gedichten*, Utrecht 1984.

——— (1993a) = Frank Willaert, 'De prozaïst als dichter: berijmd proza en verzen in de werken van Ruusbroec,' in: Th. Mertens e.a., *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Middelnederlands geestelijk proza*, Amsterdam 1993, pp. 141–155.

——— (1993b) = Frank Willaert, 'Ruusbroec als auteur,' in: E.P. Bos & G. Warnar, *Een claer verlicht man. Over het leven en werk van Jan van Ruusbroec* (*1293–1381*) (Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen, 38), Hilversum 1993, pp. 59–72.

——— (1995) = Frank Willaert, 'Is Ruusbroecs *Brulocht* literatuur?,' in: Thom Mertens (ed.), *'Siet, de brudegom comt.' Facetten van* Die geestelike brulocht *van Jan van Ruusbroec* (*1293–1381*), Kampen 1995, pp. 49–64; 89–91.

——— (2004) = Frank Willaert, 'Margaret's Booklets. Memory in "Vanden seven sloten" by Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: Willaert, Braet, Mertens & Venckeleer (2004), pp. 99–128.

Willaert, Braet, Mertens & Venckeleer (2004) = F. Willaert, H. Braet, T. Mertens, T. Venckeleer (eds), *Medieval Memory. Image and Text* (Textes et études du Moyen Âge, 27), Turnhout 2004.

Willeumier-Schalij (1947) = J.M. Willeumier-Schalij, 'Eenheid des geestes bij Jan van Ruusbroec en Willem van St Thierry,' in: *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal en Letterkunde* 65 (1947), pp. 168–173.

——— (1981) = J.M. Willeumier-Schalij, 'Ruusbroec's werk in het middeleeuwse tijdsbeeld. Een receptie-onderzoek,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 55 (1981), pp. 298–393.

William of Saint-Thierry, *Super Epistolam ad Romanos* (1989) = *Guilelmi a Sancto Theoderico opera omnia* 1: *Expositio super epistolam ad Romanos*, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 86), Turnhout 1989.

——— *Super cantica* (1997) = William of Saint-Thierry, 'Expositio super Cantica Canticorum' in: *Guilelmi a Sancto Theoderico opera omnia* 2: *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, ed. Paul Verdeyen; *Brevis Commentatio*, ed. Stanislas Ceglar & Paul Verdeyen; *Excerpta de libris beati Ambrosii super Cantica Canticorum*, ed. A. Van Burink; *Excerpta ex libris beati Gregorii super Cantica Canticorum*, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 87), Turnhout 1997, pp. 19–133.

——— *De contemplando* (2003) = William of Saint-Thierry, 'De contemplando Deo,' in *Guilelmi a Sancto Theoderico opera omnia* 3: *Opera didactica et spiritualia*, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 88), Turnhout 2003, pp. 153–173.

——— *De sacramento* (2003) = William of Saint-Thierry 'De sacramento altaris' in: *Guilelmi a Sancto Theoderico opera omnia* 3: *Opera didactica et spiritualia*, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 88), Turnhout 2003, pp. 53–91.

——— *Epistola* (2003) = William of Saint-Thierry, 'Epistola ad fraters de Monte Dei' in: *Guilelmi a Sancto Theoderico opera omnia* 3: *Opera didactica et spiritualia*, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 88), Turnhout 2003, pp. 225–289.

——— *Meditationes* (2005) = *Guilelmi a Sancto Theoderico opera omnia* 4: *Meditationes devotissimae*, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 89), Turnhout 2005.

——— *Adversus Abaelardum* (2007) = William of Saint-Thierry, 'Disputatio adversus Petrum Abaelardum,' in *Guilelmi a Sancto Theoderico opera omnia* 5: *Opuscula ddversus Petrum Abaelardum et de fide*, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 89A), Turnhout 1989, pp. 17–59.

——— *Aenigma* (2007) = William of Saint-Thierry, 'Aenigma fidei,' in: *Guilelmi a Sancto Theoderico opera omnia* 5: *Opuscula adversus Petrum Abaelardum et de fide*, ed. Paul Verdeyen (Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, 89A), Turnhout 1989, pp. 129–191.

Wiseman (1979) = J.A. Wiseman, *'Minne' in 'Die gheestelike Brulocht' of Jan van Ruusbroec* (The Catholic University of America, Studies in Sacred Theology. Second series, 277), Washington 1979.

——— (1984) = J.A. Wiseman, ' "Minne" in "Die gheestelike brulocht," ' in: Mommaers & De Paepe (1984), pp. 86–99.

——— (1985) = *John Ruusbroec. The Spiritual Espousals and Other Works*, transl. James Wiseman (Classics of Western Spirituality), New York 1985.

——— (1991a) = J.A. Wiseman, 'The Birth of the Son in the Soul in the Mystical Theology of Ruusbroec,' in: *Studia mystica* 14 (1991), pp. 30–44.

——— (1991b) = J.A. Wiseman, 'Freedom in Jan van Ruusbroec's "Spiritual Tabernacle," ' in: *Louvain Studies* 16 (1991), pp. 59–71.

Zellmann (1988) = U. Zellmann, '"Non verbum e verbo, sed sensum e sensu." Kritische Anmerkungen zu einer neuen deutschen Übersetzung der "Brulocht" des Jan van Ruusbroec,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 62 (1988), pp. 165–175.

Zhang (1998) = Xianglong Zhang, 'The "Meeting" in Ruusbroec's Spiritual Espousals,' in: *Ons geestelijk erf* 72 (1998), pp. 154–163.

——— (1999) = Xianglong Zhang, 'Ruusbroec and the Meaning of "Meeting" in his Spiritual Espousals,' in: *Journal for the study of Christian culture* 1 (1999), pp. 132–153.

Index of Names and Places

Aaron 115
Abbey of Averbode 313
Abbey of Böddeken 255
Abbey of Cîteaux 9
Abbey of Clairlieu 255
Abbey of Clairvaux 9
Abbey of Cluny 9
Abbey of Florival 18–19
Abbey of Ganda 6
Abbey of Kerkom 28
Abbey of La Ramée, Jauchelette 18, 28
Abbey of Maagdendal, Oplinter 19
Abbey of Mondragone 245
Abbey of Monte Cassino 244–245
Abbey of Our Lady of Nazareth, Lier 19
Abbey of Park, Heverlee 241, 246, 248, 274, 280
Abbey of Rozendaal (near Mechelen) 31
Abbey of Saint Agnes, Arnhem 269
Abbey of Saint Martin, Tournai 242
Abbey of Saint Nicaise 9
Abbey of Saint Panthaleon, Cologne 79
Abbey of Saint Rictrude & Saint Pierre, Marchiennes 241–242
Abbey of Saint-Thierry 9
Abbey of Saint-Victor 51, 246
Abbey of Signy 9
Abbey of Subiaco 244–245
Abbey of Ter Doest 49, 237–241, 246
Abbey of Ter Duinen 241n
Abbey of Villers 40
Abbey of Worcester 243
Abelard. *See* Peter Abelard
Acre, Palestine 28
Adam (first man) 151, 156, 158
Adilio 6
Afonso (Cardinal Infant) 295
Agletrudis 6
Ailly, Pierre d' 241–242
Alaerts, Joseph 32, 60–61, 131n, 134, 135n, 179n, 192n, 252n, 313–314, 316, 322, 335
Albanès, J.H. 273n
Albert the Great 45, 80, 309, 326
Aldegonde of Maubeuge 28n
Alexius (Capuchin) 300
Allowin. *See* Bavo
Alsace 92
Alvarez de Paz, Diego 294
Amandus 6
Ambrose 9
Ampe, Albert 49n, 50n, 51n, 77n, 80n, 85n, 88n, 92–93, 94n, 95n, 96n, 108, 131n, 133n, 134, 140n, 238n, 239n, 240n, 243n, 247n, 249, 251n, 256n, 257n, 261n, 263n, 266n, 270n, 274–275, 277–279, 281, 300n, 303n, 307, 309–313, 315n, 317–318, 319n, 321, 322n, 323–324, 327, 329n, 330, 334
Amsterdam 297
Andreas, Valerius 302
Andrés Martin, M. 293n
Andriessen, Jos 317
Anselm of Canterbury 22n, 159n
Appelmans, Gheraert 35–39
Arblaster, John 19n, 40n, 45, 49n, 54n, 61n, 339
Archennes/Eerken 18
Arnhem 269, 290
Arnold, Gottfried 93, 297, 320
Arnswaldt, August von 88–89, 93n, 97
Asbeck, Melline d' 309, 327
Assche, Hilda Van 81
Auger, Alfred 329, 334
Augustine 9, 11, 12n, 33n, 63, 125, 140, 153, 184n, 185n, 205, 211, 220, 221n, 309, 326–327
Austria 237
Austro-Hungary 313
Axters, Stefanus 6, 21n, 36, 38, 44–45, 49n, 80, 109n, 131n, 299n, 305, 309, 318, 320, 323
Aygalliers, Wautier d' 308–309, 327

Baere, Guido De 44n, 85n, 115n, 127n, 250n, 251n, 256–257, 277–278, 313–314, 316, 320, 322, 325, 333, 337
Baers, Joris 334
Bake, Alijt 87, 289
Baker, Augustine 298
Bardy, Gustave 185n

Bargilesius, Nicolaus 252
Barth, Karl 328
Barthélemy Clantier (*alias* Thonis Clautier, *alias* Bartholomaeus) 244, 263–265
Bartholomaeus Anglicus 310n
Basel 245
Bastings, A.M. 309, 310n
Bavo (Allowin) 6–8
Bazire, Joyce 95, 323
Beatrice of Nazareth 18–21, 28, 33n, 34, 35n, 36–37, 54, 61–62, 105, 180
Beauchamp, Paul 183n
Beaucousin, Richard 95, 296
Bekaert, Edward 291
Beckers, Hartmut 86n
Bede (Venerable) 67, 309
Beguinage Den Wijngaerd 53n
Behiels, Lieve 273n, 319
Bell, David 8n
Bellarmine, Robert 292
Benedict of Nursia 50
Berengar of Tours 9
Bergen, Jan 334
Berghe, F. Van den 309
Bernard of Clairvaux 5, 9–10, 13–14, 17, 19, 20n, 21, 118n, 119n, 125, 131, 161n, 168n, 180, 209, 218, 229, 309, 386
Bérulle, Pierre de 296, 301
Beuken, W.H. 108n, 303
Beyer de Ryke, Benoît 320
Birrell, T.A. 298n
Blijlevens, Klaas 334
Bloemaerdinne (Heilwig Bloemaerts) 52–55, 305–306
Blommestijn, H. 333
Blommevenna (Blomevenna), Petrus 239n, 269, 291
Blondo, Giuseppe 293
Blosius, Ludovicus 292, 294–299
Bloy, Léon 320
Boeckmans, Jef 333
Boendale, Jan van 323
Böhringer, Fr. 303
Bologna 252, 319
Bonaventure 62, 126, 131–132, 139, 142, 185n, 205–206, 228, 309, 338
Bonny, Johan 304, 336
Boon, Jessica 131n, 331
Bossuet, Jacques-Bénigne 295, 327
Bottens, Fulgentius 301
Bouman, A.C. 311
Bouwman, A. Th. 313n
Bozius, Thomas 292
Bragt, Jan Van 133n, 146n, 151n, 338
Brandsma, Titus 337
Bras, K.E. 328, 332
Brescia 293
Brooke, Odo 8n
Bruges 238, 241n, 291
Brunner, Emil 328
Brussels 37, 50–53, 55–58, 60–62, 64–66, 68, 74, 87, 88, 96, 256, 258, 300, 305–306, 311–312, 378, 380, 383, 389
Burger, Christoph 308
Bynum, Caroline Walker 159n

Camus, J.-P. 297
Canfield, Benedict of 296, 298
Cange, C. du Fresne du 74
Canisius, Petrus 291
Cassian, John 95, 161n, 209
Castello, Bartolomeo di 292
Cawley, Martinus 29n, 30n
Ceulemans, Hadewijch 115–117, 119, 125–126, 324
Chaix, G. 269n, 270n, 318
Charles V (Emperor) 53
Charterhouse of Bologna 252
Charterhouse of Cologne 269, 270n, 289–292, 318
Charterhouse of Erfurt 255
Charterhouse of Herne 27, 44, 47, 49, 59–61, 68–70, 84n, 85, 241–244, 263, 289, 318, 339, 378
Charterhouse of Monnikhuizen 252
Charterhouse of Mont-Dieu 10
Charterhouse of Roermond 313
Charterhouse of Sheen 95
Charterhouse of Vauvert (near Paris) 244, 296
Charterhouse of Villa Nova 273n
Chen, Jianhong 320
Chrétien, Guillaume 242
Cisneros, Garcia de 294
Claeys, H. 103–104
Clemens, Theo 269n

Cockx-Indestege, Elly 317
Cognet, Louis 235n, 293n, 295n, 303
Colledge, Edmund 95, 243n, 308, 319, 323, 339
Cologne 79, 89, 239n, 262, 269, 270n, 289–292, 297, 318
Combes, André 238n, 239n, 263n, 265n, 266n, 267n, 268n, 272n, 273n, 273n, 318
Conradi, Georg Johan 93
Constantinus of (Constantin de) Barbençon 301
Convent Dal van Josaphat, Bergen-op-zoom, NL 86, 96
Convent of Galilea, Ghent 88n
Convent of Meerbeek 53n
Convent of Nazareth, Geldern 88, 89n
Convent of Poor Clares, Brussels 74
Cook, Barbara Gist 135n, 144n, 168n, 328
Cordeses, Antonio 294
Cornet, Ineke 269n
Costard, Monika 89n
Coudenberg, Frank van 55–56, 58–59, 380
Council of Constance 55, 245–246
Council of Lateran IV 69
Council of Vienne 53n
County of Flanders 5, 104, 238–239, 241–242, 306, 380
Cranenburgh, H. Van 334
Cré, Marleen 95n, 319
Crean, J.E. 334, 338
Crombecius, Johannes 301
Culemborg, Jan van 79

Dailey, Patricia 21n
Daniels, A.L.J. 296n
David, Jan-Baptist 1, 89, 97, 102–103, 303, 315, 329n
De Leturia, P. 293n
Deblaere, Albert 5–6, 17, 18n, 31n, 38, 134, 135n, 138n, 183n, 192n, 301n, 335
Déchanet, Jean-Marie 8n
Deleloë, Jeanne 301
Denzinger, Henricus 23, 69n, 183n, 189n
Descendant of Ruusbroec (*Nacomelinc*) 49, 86, 89, 315, 319, 383–387
Deschamps, Jan 87n, 248n, 281, 313, 317
Deschamps, Thomas 297
Desoer (De Soer), G.B. 321, 323
Deventer 252, 258
Dier van Muiden, Rudolf 255n
Dijk, Rudolf Th. M. van 256n, 257n, 278
Dionysius the Carthusian 269, 272, 285n, 289, 291, 296, 318
Dolezich, Gabriele A.M 329n
Douai 242
Doudelet, Karel 310
Dubois-Quinard, M. 297n
Duby, Georges 110n
Duchy of Brabant 21, 27, 32, 35, 55, 62, 124, 239, 241, 257, 288, 306, 378, 380
Duclow, Donald F. 168n
Dupré, Louis 131n, 157, 330
Dykmans, Marc 50n, 240n, 249n, 260n, 281, 307

Eckhart 36–37, 45, 54, 57–58, 60, 65, 131–132, 134, 135n, 136, 138n, 140n, 141–142, 144, 148, 152–153, 155n, 168n, 171, 174, 176–177, 286, 308, 311, 328, 334, 338
Eeghem, W. Van 291n
Eichler, Wolfgang 62n, 92, 97, 322, 323
Elslander, A. Van 313
Emery Jr., Kent 243n, 285n, 318
England. *See* Great Britain
Enrique del Sagrado Corazón 320
Épiney-Burgard, Georgette 36–37, 252n, 253n, 308–309, 321
Erb, P.C. 320
Erkens, Michel 38n, 307, 310
Eschius, Nicolaus 290–291, 295, 299
Estienne, Henri 261
Eva of St Martin 5
Evagrius Ponticus 139
Eve (first woman) 151
Eymeren, Reinalda van 290

Fabriano, Mambrino da 95
Fabricius, Johannes Antonius 298
Faesen, Rob 18n, 19n, 21n, 27n, 31n, 40n, 49n, 54n, 60n, 61n, 64n, 73n, 126n, 174n, 217n, 227n, 269n, 303, 308, 316, 319–320, 325
Fano, Giovanni da 292
Feys, J. 175n, 308

Foppens, Jan Frans 302
Fraeters, Veerle 21n, 54n
Fraling, Bernhard 107, 146n, 327–328, 331, 336
France 9, 95, 110, 241, 257, 261, 273n, 288–290, 295–298, 320
Fredericq, Paul 305
Freeman, Donald Hubbard 320
Freherus, Paulus 298
Fuente, Miguel de la 294

Gabriel of Antwerp (Capuchin) 88, 300
Ganck, Roger De 238n
Gaspar de Leâo 295
Geerardijn, Achilles 256n, 277–278
Gelen, Victor 297
Gerard of Saintes (*alias* Gerard of Herne) 47, 49, 51–52, 55, 59–60, 64, 66, 70, 73, 85, 96, 304, 318–319, 325, 378–383
Germany 93, 245–246, 288, 290, 297, 319
Gerson, Jean 14, 53–55, 59–60, 64, 102n, 173, 174n, 228, 239n, 240, 242, 244, 260–268, 270–272, 286, 288, 295, 311, 317–318, 320, 327
Gertrude of Nivelles 5–6
Gheraert Appelmans. *See* Appelmans, Gheraert
Giovanna della Croce 304, 321
Glorieux, P. 264n
Godfrey of Fontaines 40
Gogarten, Friedrich 328
Gorcum, Jan van 300
Goswin de Bossut 28
Gouda 265n
Great Britain (England, Wales, Scotland) 237, 243–244, 288–289, 297–298, 319, 323
Gregory I (Pope) 9, 210, 218
Gregory IX (Pope) 28
Gregory of Nyssa 125, 168n
Grimminck, Karel 301
Groot, Myriam 134n, 170n, 336
Grote, Geert 49, 59, 76, 78, 89, 95, 237, 243, 247–249, 251–260, 263, 272, 276–279, 282, 288, 301, 303, 311n, 317, 320–323, 391–392
Groult, Pierre 293, 321
Gruijs, Albert 265n
Guarnieri, Romana 319
Gullik, Etta 228n
Gumbert, J.P. 32n, 87n

Haag, W. 338
Haan, de M.J.M. 122n
Habel, E. 74
Hadewijch 18, 21–27, 33, 36–37, 44–45, 53–54, 87, 104–107, 110, 113, 131, 138–139, 165, 168, 174, 180, 204, 206, 211, 215, 223, 232, 305, 309, 325, 331
Hadewijch II. *See* Pseudo-Hadewijch
Hahn-Jooß, Barbara 40n
Haight, Roger 182n
Harnack, Adolf (von) 328
Hart, Columba 16n, 22n, 23n, 24n, 25n, 26n, 204n, 205n
Haspengouw 6
Hatzfeld, Helmut A. 321
Heilwich Bloemaerts. *See* Bloemaerdinne
Heinrich von Hessen von Langenstein 288
Hello, Ernest 96, 103n, 320
Henry IV (Emperor) 9
Henry, Paul 131n, 132n, 134, 140n, 330
Heppe, Heinrich 328
Herp, Hendrik 87, 204, 215–216, 223n, 227–236, 239n, 272, 289–298, 300, 313, 320
's-Hertogenbosch 300
Heyrman, J. 104, 107, 323
Hill, Edmund 184n, 211n
Hilton, Walter 243n
Hinckaert, Jan 50–51, 53, 55–56, 305n, 306
Hoenen, Maarten 270n, 326
Hofman, Rijcklof 252, 254, 258, 321
Horn, Petrus 255
House of the Brethren of the Common Life, Brussels 87, 96
Hout, Maria van 290–291, 299
Howlett, D.R. 74n
Hubbeling, H.G. 326
Hugo of Balma 294
Hugo of Oignies 27n
Huijben, J. 304, 307, 310n, 337n
Huy 255
Huyghebaert, N. 238n
Huysmans, J.-K. 320

Ibn 'Arabi 338
Ida of Leuven 31–32
Ida of Nivelles 18, 28–31

Ignatius of Loyola 301
Irenaeus of Lyons 19
Isidoro de León 294
Italy 237, 244–245, 252, 257, 288–290, 292–293, 295, 319

Jacob (Patriarch) 116
Jacques de Vitry 27–28
Jan van Leeuwen 49, 286, 304, 307–308, 319, 378, 389–392
Janssens, J.D. 306–307
Javelet, Robert 8n
Jean de Saint-Samson 296
Jehan (husband of Marie of Oignies) 27
Jerome 240, 250, 254, 262
Joachim of Fiore 49n, 304–305
Joannes-Evangelista van 's-Hertogenbosch 301
Johannes de Cureghem 260
Johannes von Kastl 288
John III (Duke of Brabant) 55, 58, 124
John of the Cross 232, 236, 294, 320, 337–338
John XXII (Pope) 53n
Jonckbloet, W.J.A. 103
Joran (Abbot of Saint-Nicaise) 9
Jordaens, Willem 49, 62, 64, 66, 77, 85n, 89, 94, 95n, 204, 215–227, 229–230, 232–233, 235–254, 257–263, 268n, 270–272, 273n, 275–280, 282, 286, 311, 317, 319, 321–323
José de Jesús María Quiroga 294
Juan de Avila 294
Juan de Jesús María 294
Juan de los Angeles 294
Juliana of Mont-Cornillon 5

Kalckbrenner, Gerard 262, 269–272, 290–291
Kalff, G. 104, 106
Kern, J.H. 32n, 33n, 34n, 35n
Kerreken, Godfried 56
Kesteman, E. 320
Kienhorst, Hans 38n, 62n, 81, 85n, 86n, 88n, 246n, 312–315, 317
Kikuchi, Satoshi 65n
Kloosterman, W.S.J. 278, 321
Knuvelder, Gerard 107
Koehler, Théodore 135n, 333
Kok, Th. 308n
Kolk, Netty van der 36n
Kors, Mikel M. 38n, 62n, 78, 81, 85n, 86n, 88n, 246n, 310, 312–317
Krabben, P. Van der 309
Kreuzer, G. 245n
Kwakkel, Erik 27n, 37n, 38n, 44n, 81n, 84n

La Grande Chartreuse 270
LaCugna, Catherine Mowry 331
Laenen, J. 310
Lallemant, Louis 297
Lanspergius, Johannes Justus 291
Laredo, Bernardino de 228, 294
Latham, R.E. 74n
Laurent de Paris 297
Le Goff, Jacques 110n
Lefèvre d'Étaples, Jacques 261, 295
Lefèvre, Placide 305–306
Lemmens, Filip 307
Lerner, Robert 40n
Lessius, Leonardus 300
Letter, P. De 157n, 331
Leuven 31, 55, 102, 113
Lieftinck, G.I. 320
Liège 5, 8–9, 28, 32, 255, 378
Lievens, Robrecht 68, 80, 304n, 305n, 311, 314n, 375
Lindeman, H. 304
Loer, Bruno 291
Loer, Dirk 269, 291
López-Baralt, Luce 338
López, Blas 96n, 273, 320
Löser, F. 245n
Low Countries 5–6, 8, 10–11, 27, 35, 53n, 61, 204, 232, 236, 239, 255, 269–273, 290–291, 295, 297–298, 301–302, 308
Lübeck 269
Luis de Granada 294
Luis de León 294

Madame Acarie 296
Madame Guyon 297
Madrid 273, 295
Madrid, Alonso de 228
Maerlant, Jacob van 309, 310n

Maes, Bonifatius 301
Maeterlinck, Maurice 96, 103, 320
Maigne d'Arnis, W.H. 74n
Mainz 258, 297
Mande, Hendrik 289, 320
Marguerite Porete. *See* Porete, Marguerite
Marie de l'Incarnation 297
Marius Victorinus 132, 184n
Marler, J.C. 308, 339n
Marquard von Lindau 288
Martens, Mina 38n, 306
Martinelli Spanò, Serena 319
Maruli, Silvestro 292
Mary of Oignies 27–28, 42
Massaut, J.-P. 295n
Matthieu (Cardinal, papal legate to France) 9
Mauburnus, Johannes 295
McGinn, Bernard 40n, 130n, 131n, 135n, 138n, 146n, 148n, 164n, 174n, 205, 331
Mechelen 79, 227
Mechelen, Lucas van 301
Meerbeke, Margriet (Margarete) van 74–75, 77, 79, 117, 312
Meerhout, Jan van 79
Meert, H. 326n
Melchizidek 31
Mendonk, Ghent 6
Mercurian, Everard 64n, 293
Merswin, Rulman 62, 92, 234, 319, 323
Mertens, Thom 66, 85n, 86n, 111, 128, 245n, 315n, 316–319, 324
Michaël van Sint-Augustinus 301
Mierlo, Jozef van 8n, 19n, 21, 27n, 44n, 45, 90n, 105–107, 304–308, 309n, 311, 313, 315, 323, 329n, 339
Minnis, Alistair 27n
Miraeus, Aubert 248–251, 255, 277, 302
Moereels, Lode 223n, 229n, 334
Moine, Claudine 297
Mommaers, Paul 113, 131n, 133n, 146n, 147n, 151n, 157n, 170n, 273n, 296n, 324, 331–334, 337–338
Moreau, Brigitte 261n
Moses 67, 115
Mosheim, Johann Lorenz 298
Müller (Muller), Ph. 89, 94n, 278, 315, 321
Murdoch, Iris 127n
Nachtergaele, V. 320
Nélis, H. 305
Nieuwenhove, Rik Van 49n, 131n, 132n, 133n, 140n, 143, 146n, 147n, 150n, 152n, 157n, 158n, 159n, 168n, 192n, 206n, 207n, 208n, 211n, 214n, 217n, 225n, 227n, 309n, 328–329, 338
Nieuwlant, Claesinne van 300
Nivelles/Nijvel 27–28
Noë, Hilde 102n, 119n, 121n, 123n, 124n, 126n, 127n, 314, 316, 323, 325
Norbert Ubarri, Miguel 316, 321
Nygren, Anders 328

O'Sheridan, Paul 47n, 304–305, 305n, 311, 334
Öhman, Emil 36, 37n
Oisterwijk 290
Oosterman, Johan 129n
Oostrom, Frits van 102, 110, 111n, 112
Opgenhaffen, Tim 6n, 28n
Orcibal, J. 293n, 321
Origen 9, 12n, 19, 161
Osuna, Francisco de 228, 294
Otbert (Bishop of Liège) 9
Otterloo, A.A. van 329n
Owen, H.W. 298n

Paepe, Norbert De 122n
Pak, Pyong-Gwan 131n, 134n, 145n, 152n, 163n, 309, 332
Paquot, Jean-Noël 302
Paris 40, 51, 59, 95, 244, 257, 261, 265n, 295–296
Pascal, Blaise 209, 229
Paulissen, J.H.J. 301n
Peeters, L. 334
Pennotto, Gabriël 292
Pepin (King of the Franks) 5
Persoons, Ernest 304n, 307, 320
Peter Abelard 9, 13
Peter Comestor 67, 309
Peters, Gerlach 289, 297
Petrocchi, M. 293n
Petrucci, P.M. 293
Petyt, Maria 301
Plato 16n, 77
Podevijn, R. 6n
Poiret, Pierre 297–298

Poland 237, 245–246
Pomerius, Henricus (Henrik Uten Bogaerde) 47, 49n, 50–59, 62, 108–109, 240, 260–261, 270, 286, 304–306, 310–311, 317, 389, 392
Poppel, Van 309
Porete, Marguerite 19, 40–46, 54, 57–58, 60–62, 75, 80, 174, 308, 339
Porion, Jean-Baptist 21n, 45
Porteman, Karel 301n
Portugal 290, 293, 295
Post, R. 321, 322n
Poukens, J.B. 306, 315
Priory of Groenendaal 11, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57–60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 74–75, 84, 86, 96, 216, 237–238, 240–244, 246, 248, 256, 258, 260, 263, 265–266, 286, 288, 304–305, 274, 282, 310–312, 315, 322, 381, 384, 389–392
Priory of Rooklooster 27n, 35n, 37–38, 84, 307, 310, 313
Proclus 132
Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite 16n, 125, 132, 145n, 161, 192n, 205, 209n, 217n, 274, 282, 294, 309, 318
Pseudo-Hadewijch 44–46, 80, 339–375
Pseudo-Ruusbroec 94n, 96, 375–378
Puente, Luis de la 294
Pullen, Pelgrim 300

Quintilian 240

Radewynzoon , Florentius (*alias* Florens Radewijns) 303
Rayez, A. 295n
Reims 9
Remundus 261
Renouard, A.A. 261n
Reynaert, Joris 21n, 110, 131n, 309
Reypens, Leonce 19, 35–36, 37n, 38, 39n, 79–80, 90n, 132n, 156n, 163n, 164n, 216, 221n, 251, 278, 305–307, 310–311, 313–315, 318, 320n, 321–322, 329–330, 333–334, 337
Rhineland 125, 205, 258, 269, 291, 295, 338
Ricard, R. 295n
Rice, E.F. 262n
Richard of Saint-Victor 77, 294, 338
Ridder, P. De 305, 307
Rijkel 36
Rijnsburg (near Leiden) 297
Ripelin of Strasburg, Hugo 62, 310
Ritschl, Albrecht 328
River Jordan 7, 28
Rocquet, Claude-Henri 303, 334
Roemans, Robrecht 81
Rolevinck, Werner 289
Rolfson, Helen 35n, 36, 38n, 39n, 49n, 217n, 227n, 316, 334
Rolle, Richard 163
Rombouts, E. 122n
Ronde, Theo De 320
Roovere, Anthonis de 291
Ruelens, K. 305
Ruh, Kurt 36–37, 44n, 45, 79n, 112n, 130n, 166, 218n, 303, 322
Ruisbroek (between Halle and Brussels) 50
Ruisbroek (near Puurs) 50
Rydstrøm-Poulsen, Aage 8n

Saint-Jure, Jean-Baptiste de 297
Sales, Francis de 235n, 296
Salutio, Bartolomeo da 292
Sanchis Alventosa, Joaquin 321
Sandaeus, Maximilianus 297–298
Sanderus, Antonius 241n, 302
Sargent, Michael G. 40n, 243n, 319, 323
Sassen, Ferdinand 326
Schaarbeek 50n
Scharpé, L. 315
Scheepsma, Wybren 19n, 28n, 32, 127n
Scheffler, Johann (= Angelus Silesius) 298
Schepers, Kees 79n, 85n, 239n, 243n, 245n, 258n, 269n, 310–311, 317, 321
Schilling, W.C.A. 105, 324
Schirpenbach, Meik 331
Schmidt, George-Charles 94
Schmitt-Fiack, Renate 338
Schmitz, Ph. 244n
Schoonhoven, Jan van 50, 54, 87, 239n, 242, 260, 263, 265–268, 272, 286, 317–318, 391
Schoote, Jean-Pierre Van 270n
Schultz-Zellmann, Ulrike 147n, 325
Schweitzer, F.-J. 308
Scotland. *See* Great Britain
Senensis, Sixtus 292
Seynnaeve, Johan 325

Seyringer, Nikolaus 245
Silesius, Angelus. *See* Scheffler, Johann
Silva Dias, J.S. da 295n
Simon of Cyrene 25–26
Simons, Walter 53n
Smits van Waesberghe, M.M.J. 334
Snellaert, F.A. 103, 315
Soer, G.B. De. *See* Desoer
Soissons 9
Sonian Forest 38, 55, 58, 104, 380
Sousa Tavares, Francisco de 295
Spain 273, 290, 293–295
Spearritt, P. 298n
Spieghel, Jan 260
Spinoza, Baruch de 326
Spizelius, Theophilus 298
Standonck, Johannes 295
Stephen (Bishop of Liège) 5
Stevens, Jan 88n
Stracke, Desideer Adolf 36n, 305, 313, 315
Strasbourg 62, 92, 245, 319, 322
Sucquet, Antonius 301
Sudermann, Daniel 92, 94, 97, 297
Surin, Jean-Joseph 297
Surius, Laurentius 66, 79–80, 90, 93, 95–97, 128, 135n, 262, 269–274, 275n, 282, 291, 297, 311, 318, 320–322, 375, 376n
Suso, Henry 87, 95, 163, 171, 174, 269, 303
Swart, Loet 325, 332, 337
Sweertius, Franciscus 302
Switzerland 303

Tauler, John 87, 92–93, 138, 152n, 156n, 164, 171, 174, 245, 270, 290–297, 300, 303, 318, 320
Teasdale, Wayne 330
Teresa of Avila 75, 163, 236, 294, 337
Tersteegen, Gerhard 297
Thomas à Kempis 87, 255, 289, 303
Thomas Aquinas 31n, 140, 183n, 309, 327
Thomas of Cantimpré 310
Tienen 18, 28
Tomás de Jesús (Thomas a Jesu) 294, 300
Tremblay, Joseph du 297
Trier 255, 258

Umans, J.M. 320
Utenbogaerde, Henrik. *See* Pomerius
Utrecht 243
Uyttenhove, Lieve 185n, 192n, 207, 331

Valenciennes 40, 308
Vallarsa, Alessia 46n
Veghel, Optat de (Optatus van) 228n, 300n
Vekeman, Herman 44n, 114n, 306, 334
Verdeyen, Paul 8–10, 11n, 12n, 13, 14n, 16n, 27, 40–41, 45, 47n, 50n, 54, 58n, 131n, 146n, 153n, 177n, 303–306, 308–309, 318, 334
Verjans, P.M. 307
Vermeylen, August 105
Verschueren, Lucidius 239n, 320
Vervoort, Frans 300
Vetter, Ferdinand 156n
Virgin Mary 28, 31, 32n, 39, 187, 189–190, 202
Visch, Carolus de 241n
Voaden, Roselyn 27n
Vreese, Willem de 35, 49n, 52n, 55n, 59n, 64n, 71n, 79n, 85n, 86n, 87n, 89n, 304–305, 307, 313, 383, 389

Wackers, Paul 111n, 114–117, 119, 125, 306
Wales. *See* Great Britain
Walle, P.A. Van de 327
Warnar, Geert 50n, 51, 53n, 78n, 80, 85n, 108–110, 112, 128n, 129, 130n, 171n, 306–307, 311–312, 313n, 318–319, 323–325, 383
Weil, Simone 225
Weiler, Anton 306
Westerlinck, Albert 108n
Wevel, Godfried (van) 79, 86, 281, 286
Wevel, Simon (van) 281
Wijc, Sayman van 249
Wilde, G. De 306
Wilkeshuis, C. 327
Will, R. 309n
Willaert, Frank 54n, 100, 102, 110, 111n, 113n, 117–119, 125–126, 128, 129n, 324, 326
Willambroux 27
Willems, J.F. 303

Willeumier-Schalij, J.M. 87, 275, 277–278, 280–281, 309, 318–319
William of Saint-Thierry 5, 8–17, 21, 27, 58, 62, 75, 125, 131, 153n, 180, 183n, 309, 331
Wiseman, James 167n, 168n, 169n, 172, 213n, 334–336
Wisse, Jan 3, 383
Würzburg 297
Wynkyn de Worde 95

Zachmoorter, Michiel 301
Zhang, Xianglong 168n, 333–334
Zoutleeuw 18

Index of Ruusbroec's Works and Other Primary Sources

Ruusbroec's Works:

Little Book 35n, 49n, 60, 68–74, 82, 84, 85n, 87n, 88n, 93, 135n, 136, 139, 144, 147n, 157, 166n, 167n, 169, 174n, 175, 177n, 178n, 186–189, 198, 200, 247–248, 274–275, 282, 313–314, 316, 319–320, 326, 333, 335, 378, 382, 387

Enclosures 74–75, 84n, 88n, 94, 117–118, 127n, 134n, 135n, 136n, 138n, 145n, 156, 161, 166n, 167n, 171n, 174n, 177, 178n, 193–195, 197–199, 275, 282, 312, 314, 316, 322, 387

Espousals 11n, 20, 37–38, 41, 49, 54, 60, 62–64, 66, 84, 85n, 87n, 88–89, 92, 93n, 95–98, 100, 103–104, 108–109, 113, 119, 126–128, 130, 133, 134n, 135n, 136n, 138, 139, 141, 142n, 143n, 144–145, 146n, 147n, 148n, 150, 151n, 152–154, 155n, 158, 160–162, 164n, 166–167, 168n, 169n, 171, 173, 174n, 175–176, 177n, 178n, 180–184, 190, 193–195, 197–200, 204, 207n, 212n, 213–214, 215n, 216n, 219n, 225n, 228, 231, 233, 234–235, 237–238, 243, 245, 248–250, 252, 255, 257–258, 262–263, 275–276, 282, 288, 295–296, 300, 308, 311–313, 315–316, 319, 321–324, 327–328, 331–333, 335–337, 378, 380–381, 387

Realm 32, 38n, 46, 60–62, 68, 84n, 85, 87n, 119–126, 128, 134n, 135n, 136, 138–140, 141n, 142n, 145n, 147n, 148n, 152n, 153, 155n, 160–161, 163n, 166n, 171n, 174n, 175–176, 179–181, 183–186, 192, 194–197, 199–200, 206n, 231, 233, 235, 277, 282, 310, 312, 314–316, 319, 324–326, 331, 335–336, 378, 381, 387

Tabernacle 39n, 57n, 58n, 59, 66–67, 83–84, 85n, 88n, 89–90, 115–117, 119, 136n, 138, 150n, 152n, 159–160, 161n, 171n, 174n, 177n, 181–182, 184, 186–191, 193–194, 196–197, 247–251, 277, 282, 309–310, 312, 314–316, 322, 324, 331, 334, 378, 381, 387

Beguines 46, 78, 79n, 84, 93n, 114–115, 117, 119, 131–132, 133n, 135n, 136, 139n, 140, 142, 143, 144n, 145n, 147n, 148n, 149, 152n, 155n, 159, 166n, 171n, 174n, 176–177, 178n, 182–186, 188–200, 206–207, 226n, 247, 277, 282, 308, 310, 314, 315–316, 324, 331, 387

Mirror 10, 46, 59, 75–77, 84, 87n, 88n, 89n, 90, 93n, 94–95, 136n, 138n, 143, 146–148, 149n, 155, 157–158, 159n, 161n, 167, 171n, 174n, 177, 178n, 184, 187–190, 192–197, 200–201, 212–213, 235, 247, 255–257, 258n, 277–278, 282, 291, 312, 314–316, 322, 387

Rungs 35n, 46, 56, 57n, 58–59, 77–78, 84, 85n, 89–90, 93n, 94, 135, 136n, 137, 138n, 139, 140n, 144, 145n, 147n, 152n, 160–161, 166n, 171n, 174, 176, 178, 182, 184, 187, 190, 193–201, 210, 232, 235, 247–251, 255, 257, 258n, 278, 282, 312, 314–316, 321, 331, 334, 387

Stone 11n, 35n, 41, 54n, 64–65, 84, 85n, 87n, 88n, 89, 92–94, 97, 118n, 127, 136n, 138n, 139n, 161, 166n, 167–168, 174n, 177n, 178, 190, 193–194, 196, 208, 209n, 210, 211n, 230, 234–235, 243, 245, 247, 248, 250, 279–280, 282, 288, 313, 315–316, 319, 321–323, 331, 333, 336, 378, 382, 387

Temptations 68, 78n, 84n, 87n, 88n, 89n, 93–94, 190–191, 211, 225n, 248, 280–282, 288, 314, 316, 319, 387

Faith 65–66, 84n, 87n, 93n, 94, 136, 183–184, 188, 190–191, 195, 200, 281–282, 310, 313, 316, 387

Letters 57n, 79, 85, 90, 128, 245–246, 270, 281–282, 311–312, 316, 324

Other Primary Sources

XII dogheden, Godfried Wevel 79, 86, 90, 96, 286, 311, 322n

Adversus Abaelardum, William of Saint-Thierry 12n

Aenigma Fidei, William of Saint-Thierry 10–11, 183n

Beati pauperes spiritu, Eckhart 308

Besloten hof, Anon. 301

Breve compendio, Pierre de Bérulle 293, 296

Brief 1, Hadewijch 23, 33n
Brief 6, Hadewijch 21–27
Brief 10, Hadewijch 33n
Brief 17, Hadewijch 26
Brief 18, Hadewijch 33n
Calcedonian Creed 23n
Ceremoniale (of the Capuchin Order) 300
Chronica, Thomas a Kempis 255n
Collationes patrum, John Cassian 95, 161n, 209n
Commendatio seu defentio, Jan van Schoonhoven 265–266
Compendium theologicae veritatis, Hugo Ripelin 310
Conflictus, Willem Jordaens 250n
Cur Deus homo, Anselm of Canterbury 22n
Das Buoch von der fúrkomenen gnoden und von der verdienlichen gnoden, Rulman Merswin 319
Dbuec vanden boegarde, Anon. 33
De adhaerendo Deo, Johannes von Kastl 288
De beghardis et beguinabus, Johann Lorenz Mosheim 298
De contemplando Deo, William of Saint-Thierry 11, 14n
De diligendo Deo, Bernard of Clairvaux 20n, 209n, 386
De divinis nominibus, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite 145n, 192n
De donis spiritus sancti, Dionysius the Carthusian 285
De novem rupibus, Rulman Merswin 234
De origine Viridisvallis & Vita Rusbrochi, Henricus Pomerius 47n, 50n, 52n, 53n, 56, 57n, 59n, 108–109, 261n, 270, 304–305, 311, 392
De oris osculo, Willem Jordaens 216–227
De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum Wilhelmo Iordani interprete, Willem Jordaens 49n, 85n, 238, 239n, 240–246, 249–251, 253–254, 258–268, 272, 275–276, 282
De quattor gradibus violentae caritatis, Richard of Saint-Victor 77
De sacramento altaris, William of Saint-Thierry 10
De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis, Robert Bellarmine 292
De Trinitate, Augustine 184n, 211n, 221n
Den grondt-steen der volmaectheyt, Karel Grimminck 301
Der cherubinischer Wandersmann, Angelus Silesius 298
Der naturen bloeme, Jacob van Maerlant 309
Die evangelische Peerle, Anon. 269–270, 290–292, 296–297, 299
Den tempel onser sielen, Anon. 290, 299
Eden contemplativorum, Hendrik Herp 290
Ein guot lere des Taulers, Anon. 319
Epistola 24, Geert Grote 49n
Epistola 54, Geert Grote 49n
Epistola 238, Augustine 12n
Epistola Aurea, William of Saint-Thierry 9–11, 13n, 14n, 58
Epistola de caritate, Anon. 242
Epistola prima ad fratrem Bartholomaeum, Jean Gerson 242, 264–265
Epistola responsalis, Jan van Schoonhoven 239n, 242, 266–268
Epistola secunda ad fratrem Bartholomaeum, Jean Gerson 268
Essercitii spirituali, Giuseppe Blondo 293
Eulogy of John of Ruusbroec, Jan van Leeuwen 49n, 378, 389–392
Exercitia theologiae mysticae, Nicolaus Eschius 291
Expositio super Cantica Canticorum, William of Saint-Thierry 14, 16n, 17n
Glose op den Pater Noster, Gerhard Appelmans 35–39
Groenendaal Codex 76, 84–87, 89–90, 96, 109, 246–249, 312, 314
Historia Scholastica, Petrus Comestor 67, 309
Horologium sapientae, Henry Suso 95
In agro dominico, Pope John XXII 69n, 308
In Jeremiam, Origen 12n
Institutiones Taulerianae, Anon. 290, 292, 294–296
Le mirouer des simples ames, Marguerite Porete 19, 40–45, 54, 75, 308
Leven van Jezus, Anon. 310
Liber de natura rerum, Thomas of Cantimpré 310
Libro de la vida, Teresa of Avila 163n

Limburgse sermoenen 32–35, 62
Lof vanden heylighen sacramente, Anthonis De Roovere 291
Meditationes devotisimae, William of Saint-Thierry 11, 14n
Mengeldichten, Hadewijch & Pseudo-Hadewijch 44–46, 80, 339–375
Moradas del Castillo interior, Teresa of Avila 75
Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed 65, 190
Obituarium of Groenendaal 49–50, 249–250, 260, 307
On the building of the Ark, Venerable Bede 67
Ornatus spiritualis desponsationis Gerardo Magno interprete, Geert Grote 95n, 251–260, 263n, 276, 278, 282
Planctus, Willem Jordaens 250n, 260
Predigt 37, John Tauler 156n
Predigt 52, Eckhart 152n
Pro theologia mystica clavis, Maximilianus Sandaeus 297–298
Prologhe van broeder gerardus, Gerard of Saintes 47, 49, 52, 85, 304, 319, 325, 378–383
Quicumque ("Athanasian" Creed) 65, 190
Reden der unterscheidung, Eckhart 311
Règle de perfection, Benedict of Canfield 296, 298
Rule of St Augustine 27, 59, 64, 74–75, 84n
Rule of St Benedict 245
Sancta Sophia, Benedict of Canfield, transl. Baker 298
Sankt Georgen Sermons 32–33
Scala perfectionis, Walter Hilton 243n
Schala anagogica, Alexius 300
Schwester Katrei, Anon. 308
Sermo 45, Augustine 33n
Sermo De Diversis 3, Bernard of Clairvaux 161n
Sermones super Cantica Canticorum, Bernard of Clairvaux 13n
Soliloquium, Gerlach Peters 289
Speculum Fidei, William of Saint-Thierry 11, 75
Spieghel der volcomenheit, Hendrik Herp 227–236, 239n, 290, 292
Strofische gedichten, Hadewijch 110
Subida del monte Sion, Bernardino de Laredo 294
Summa practica theologiae mysticae, Victor Gelen 297
Summa theologiae, Thomas Aquinas 31n, 140n, 183n
Super Libros Sententiarum, Bonaventure 185n
Symposium, Plato 77
Tercer abecedario, Francisco de Osuna 294
The Chastising of God's Children 95, 243, 319, 323
The Epilogue, the 'Descendant' (*Nacomelinc*) 49, 86, 89, 319, 383–387
The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God (English translation of *Stone*) 94–95, 243, 323
Theologia Mystica, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite 132
Totius vitae spiritualis summa, Pseudo-Ruusbroec 80
Tusschen onderscheit van sien, aensien ende besien, Pseudo-Ruusbroec 80
Tweevormig traktaetken, Anon. 44n
Vader ons glose, Pseudo-Ruusbroec 79
Van der heiligen selen, Anon. 34
Van seven manieren van heiliger minne, Beatrice of Nazareth 18n, 19, 33, 35n
Vanden heiligen sacramente, Pseudo-Ruusbroec 79
Vanden sacramente des autaers, Pseudo-Ruusbroec 80
Visioen 7, Hadewijch 26
Vita Aldegondis, Anon. 28n
Vita Bavonis, Anon. 6–8
Vita Beatricis, Anon. 18n, 19
Vita Gertrudis, Anon. 5
Vita Idae de Lovanio, Anon. 32n
Vita Idae de Nivellis, Goswin of Bossut 29n, 30n
Vita Magistri Gerardi Magni, Petrus Horn 255n
Vita Mariae Oigniachensi, Jacques de Vitry 28n, 42

Index of Scripture References

Genesis
1:16 19, 146, 147

Exodus
24–31 66
25:31–40 159
27:1–8 150n

Psalms
Ps. 34:9 385
Ps. 38:4 29
Ps. 41:8 138

Song of Songs
1:16 15n, 33
2:5 29
5:4 232

Wisdom
9:17 220n
10:10 61, 120n, 148n

Isaiah
11:1–3 160
43:10 222n
66:2 15n

Matthew
3:13–17 191
3:16 7n
3:17 28
5:14 7n
5:48 69n
10:16 7n
17:5 28
25:6 63, 161
26:5 172
28:19 191

Luke
4:22 30
6:45 30
10:27 219
15:11–20 25
21:10 148n
22:42 8n

John
1:1–18 142
1:3–4 31, 212
6:44 222n
10:30 13
10:38 11, 31n
12:32 221
14:9 221
14:10 31n
14:19–21 31n
17:21 31n, 187, 195, 200, 202
17:21–24 176
17:22 69

Romans
8:35 7n

1 Corinthians
6:17 13, 15, 173
9:24 66, 67

2 Corinthians
5:17 16n

Ephesians
2:21–22 67

Colossians
1:15 147

Philippians
3:13 168n

Apocalypse
2:17 64–65
14:13 76